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[ON THE TRACK OF A SECRET.]

## SNOWDROP'S FORTUNES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"From her Own Lips," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER VI.

ALL the party looked on at the performance with interest and wonder, there was something so unlike what they had expected in the appearance of little Snowdrop and her father and mother, that they could not help fancying that she must be something more than a common wandering child; and when the show was over and the little girl appeared again with her tambourine to seek the contributions of the company, Mr. Fortescue beckoned her to him and put half-a-crown into her hand.

With some innate feeling of refinement, Snowdrop had rather shrunk from soliciting the largesse of these well-dressed strangers who had not shouted at her, or made audible remarks, or tried to put her out, as was the custom of the natives at country fairs. She felt she was appreciated, and young as she was the fact made her shy. To deceive the audi-

ence in the barest way, to trick them in the most obvious fashion was generally enough, but she had felt since these grand people came in that she was being watched, that they were critical; only she had no idea what critical meant, except in her feelings; and the fact put her on her mettle, and the professor too. He did his utmost to show off his protégée to the best advantage, and certainly Snowdrop's feats of skill and second sight had never been more carefully displayed.

She told the numbers on people's watches, and the first letter of the maker's name, when she had been blindfolded and seated the whole length of the show away from her father who himself only saw the articles for a minute. She told Lady Wrexham, who was interested in spite of herself, the name on a card she took from her pocket, spelling it out letter by letter, and never missing one; and she named every article her father touched in such rapid succession that it was almost impossible to follow her. No wonder that the canvas roof rang again with applause, and that everyone was eager to see and speak to the child when her performance was over.

There was some trouble in getting the audience away, for the aristocratic party did not move for a little while, and people were curious to hear what they would say to the little girl when she came to them. The ladies shook hands with her and asked her if she were not tired. Lady Wrexham looking at her with increased interest, for now that she saw her closely there certainly was a resemblance between her and her own little Laura.

Laura's eyes were blue, but the colour of the hair was the same and the contour of the face was not unlike, and the similarity of voice was startling. When the child first spoke her ladyship started, almost fancying that she heard her own little girl. It was a coincidence of course, brought about by the absurd remark of that silly girl; but when she came to see Snowdrop closer, she was obliged to admit the likeness. She detained her a moment and asked her name.

"Snowdrop," promptly replied the child.

"But you have some other name?"

"No, lady."

"What is your father's name?"

"He's the professor," the child replied.



"and my mother is madame—that's mother," and she pointed to the resplendent figure still upon the platform. Mrs. Potts was watching rather anxiously for the end of Snowdrop's conversation with the grand people who were talking to her. She had always an uneasy feeling that they should lose the child sometime, and she was genuinely attached to her; independently of her value as part of the show, she had taken the place of the little child they had buried and was to them as a daughter; they had had her about a year now, and the poor baby had almost forgotten the night of misery and terror when she had run away from Mrs. Higgs and found the Good Shepherd in the person of honest Job Potts the showman.

"Come here, little woman," Mr. Fortescue said, when Lady Wrexham had done with her, "so father's the professor, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"But he has another name you know, what is it?"

"Will you ask father, please sir?" Snowdrop replied, "He told me I was not to answer questions, but to say my name was Snowdrop, and so it is."

"Right, little one, I will ask father," the young man replied. "Her very face," he muttered to himself, "her eyes—where did this baby get them?"

"Are you tired, little girl?"

"No, sir."

"Not after all that wonderful performance? Who taught you?"

"Father, sir, and mother?"

"And that is mother there?"

"Yes, sir."

"And they are kind to you?"

"Oh yes," and there was no hesitation in the answer; "they love me and I love them."

"And you wouldn't like to leave them?"

"Leave them! leave father and mother, sir!" and the soft dark eyes filled with tears at the bare prospect. "I couldn't sir!" and Snowdrop looked round in dismay, as if she thought this grand gentleman who had given her such a lot of money was going there and then to carry her off.

But Mr. Fortescue had no such evil intent, he had only asked the question to see how the child would take it; he had an idea that she was not the child of these people, and he would guess from her answer whether it was parroted or not. It was genuine, there was no mistake about that. If they had come by her in any dishonest way, Snowdrop herself was either ignorant of it, or they had treated her so kindly that she loved them like her own parents.

"All right, little spring-flower," he said, smiling reassuringly, "I'm not going to take you away from them; father is coming to fetch you. I think I'll have a talk with that worthy showman," he added, *so to voice*, as the professor bowed and the little girl curtseyed their adieux, and the party left the booth.

"Well, Lady Wrexham, how do you like the sawdust?" he asked, when they were once more in the open air.

"Not at all," replied her ladyship, shaking her dress. "And I'm frightfully tired. Where's Rupert?"

"Behind us, isn't he?"

"No! he went out soon after the show commenced; he said something about a headache; he's got one of his gloomy fits on, I suppose, and we shall not see any more of him for a long time."

Only his wife had noticed Lord Wrexham steal away from the booth. They were all so intent on Snowdrop and her wonders that no one noticed him. He strode away from the shows and their bustle, and took a path across some fields that led him to the bank of the river. Then he flung himself down on the water's brink and took off his hat and let the air play round his heated forehead.

"Am I going mad, I wonder," he said to himself, "that the trick of a child's face, the look of a pair of baby eyes should unman me like this. A showman's brat, and a fancied re-

semblance—and yet, was it fancy? is there not the same soft outline, the same eyes! her very gestures? Bah! I am a man or an idiot, that I cannot rid myself of this haunting shadow, this memory of nearly ten years ago?"

He rose and paced backwards and forwards gazing into the water.

"Is part of the punishment for a past of wickedness, the memory of the happiness that it brought, I wonder? What is it that the poet says?"

'That a sorrow's crown of sorrow,  
Is remembering happier things'

It is the truest line that ever was written. Why should I be punished so? I sinned in concealment, I was meditating worse when heaven stepped in and saved me. Bah! I am a fool! there is no chance of the secret ever leaking out, even if I am not mistaken; I wonder if it would be difficult to drown. To lie down in the cool clear water there, and let it choke me? Some people could drown—I am afraid I should find it difficult; life would be too strong and my instincts too keen. I must try some other way if I want to leave the world. I will see this showman, and in the meantime I must go back to my lady and the rest of them and hide the fox under my cloak."

There was much talk about the shows and the little girl over a merry luncheon, the ladies protesting that she ought to be taken from such a dreadful life, and have a place found for her in London, where her talents would be properly appreciated.

"And where she would be as completely out of her element as a fish out of water," Mr. Fortescue said. "She stands out where she is like a brilliant star, and the people who have got her know how to bring that about; but if she were taken away and produced in London, she might not seem anything extraordinary; that sort of thing is done by all sorts of people."

Somehow Professor Eglantine was not quite satisfied with the day's doings when the hour for closing came. The receipts had been unparalleled, and Snowdrop had had more money than ever given her by the company; but he was not pleased with the questioning to which she had been subjected, and asked her over and over again what the gentleman had said to her. He had seen the look of eager interest with which Mr. Fortescue had followed the child, and he felt certain it was not all due to the performance, clever though it was.

"And you are sure you didn't tell him anything?" he asked her, as she sat on his knee eating her supper after the fatigues of the day.

"No father, I told him to please to ask you."

"That's a good girl."

"And I said I should not like to go away from you, and you won't let me, will you, father?"

"Bless the child, no," said Mrs. Potts from her corner.

"There, that'll do," Mr. Potts said at length; "of course we won't let you go; look here, mother, put that young one to bed, I want to have a chat with you. And who may you be, sir, I should like to know? and what do you want?" he added in amazement, as a man appeared at the open half-door of the caravan and looked in, evidently much interested in the proceedings inside.

#### CHAPTER VII.

"I AM no one very formidable, I hope," replied the voice of Mr. Fortescue. "I have been trying to attract your attention without being so rude as to disturb you at your supper; but—"

"But I was too busy eating, and Jeremiah there too frightened that all his supper was going, to hear anyone," Job Potts replied. "We do take kindly to our food after business is over, and that's a fact. What might you

please to want, sir? I can tell I am speaking to a gentleman, though I can't rightly see you."

"Thank you, my good friend," the young man said; "you saw me this afternoon in your show."

"Talking to the little 'un," observed Mr. Potts; "yes, I remember, and you want to see me?"

"If you please, Mr. Potts—"

"Might I ask you how you came by my name, sir?"

"Off the back of your waggon here," said Mr. Fortescue, laughing; "I have nearly broken my neck getting at you, and I have disturbed the peace of three families who have little girls already. Can you give me a minute of your time, or are you too tired?"

"Oh, I'm not tired," the professor said, rising. He had been inclined to be what his wife called grumpy at first at the intrusion, and felt suspicious of this soft spoken stranger; but there was something in Arthur Fortescue's manner that generally disarmed everybody antagonistic to him at first, and Job Potts' transient ill humour vanished at the pleasant tones and the hearty manner of the stranger.

"Is it anything that you can't say before the missis?" he asked, getting up; "because if it is, I had better come down and we'll have it out outside."

"I would rather speak to you alone first," Mr. Fortescue replied, with a glance at Jeremiah who had fallen to on the contents of the pudding basin and was devouring his supper while he saw the chance, "you are quite welcome to tell Mrs. Potts every word I say to you, but—"

"All right," said Job, hastily putting on his coat, which he had taken off to make his attire more comfortable for supper.

"If it's a question I can answer, well and good; if I can't I can't, and there's no harm done and no more about it."

"If you can't of course, but I think you can."

"Let's hear it, sir, and then I can tell you."

"Where did you get that little girl from?" A straightforward question, no beating about the bush, and it hit Job Potts like a blow between the eyes.

"Where did I get my little Snowdrop, sir? Why?"

"She's not your child, you know," the young man said, "and she knows it too."

"Did she say so, sir?"

"No she did not; she calls you father and your wife mother and loves you—there's no doubt about that, but she is not your child."

Job Potts looked at his questioner for a moment, keenly, as if he would read his face and gather his motive from it.

"I don't know that I have any call to tell any one about her, sir," he said quite civilly but firmly, "unless you can show some reason for wanting to know."

"I believe I can, I hope I can," said the young man in an agitated tone. "Look here, Mr. Potts, that child you are exhibiting—that little girl is—"

He stopped for a moment as if wondering whether he should say any more, and looking round fearfully lest any one should be listening.

"There's no one about, sir," Job said, "they are mostly asleep by now; we are closer to my own concern than any other, and you may speak to me; whatever you say I shall keep to myself, you need not be afraid."

"I don't think I need. The little girl is the counterpart of a dear lost friend of mine, who disappeared some ten years or so ago from her home, and every trace of her has been lost ever since; no one ever heard of her after the day she left her father's house; nothing was found save a letter left behind her, to say that she would come back sometime the wife of the man she loved, and who loved her. But who he was, or where she met him, or whether she went, we have never heard."

"That's an odd story, sir," the showman said; "it sounds like a bit of a play."

"It is true, every word of it; there are stranger things in real life sometimes than are



to be seen on the boards or read of in books. We believe the young lady to be dead; it can hardly be possible that she is alive, and has not communicated with her friends all this time. But her face and form are repeated in this child; the likeness is marvellous. See here!"

He struck a wax vesta and showed Job Potts a miniature in a locket he wore at his watch chain; the showman looked at it by the bright little light and started in astonishment.

"It is our Snowdrop," he said—"Snowdrop grew to about fifteen or thereabout."

"She was seventeen when that was taken, and we lost her a year afterwards," Arthur Fortescue said, with a sigh that made Mr. Potts look at him curiously.

"Sister, or sweetheart I wonder?" he said to himself, "one or 'tother, he's too young, I am thinking, for it to have been sweetheart."

He was wrong there, it had been sweetheart; Arthur Fortescue was older than he looked, and at the time of his cousin's disappearance had been about two-and-twenty. No one would have taken him for over thirty now, with his fair hair all curling over his well-shaped head, and his boyish face and merry laugh. There are some men who never seem to grow old, and he would be a boy to his grave.

"I think you have a right to ask, sir," the showman said gravely; "that can't be a chance likeness. I'll tell you all I know, and how I came by Snowdrop. You won't have me up for child stealing?"

"Not I, you are quite safe for me; I only want to know where you picked her up, because if there is any clue to her parentage it may lead to something—that is all."

"Picked her up? that's just it, sir, that's exactly what I did do." And Job in his rough way told the story of Snowdrop's rescue.

When the recital was over Arthur said earnestly, "You have acted nobly, Mr. Potts, and your good wife too. I should like to shake hands with her, she must be a good woman."

"Middlin' sir, middlin'," said the gratified Job. "Will you please to step up, sir? she'll be proud and delighted. I am afraid she has put the little 'un to bed or—"

"I will come and look at her another day, Mr. Potts," said Mr. Fortescue, and followed the showman up the steps into his curious home.

Arthur Fortescue gazed round him curiously as he entered the scrupulously clean little dwelling. There was no sign of a bed to his unaccustomed eyes, yet Snowdrop was safely and comfortably stowed away in a sufficiently airy resting-place and was fast asleep, knowing nothing of the inquiries that were being made about her; and Jeremiah had been made to finish his supper rather more hastily than was his pleasure generally, and take his long legs into a corner, where he sat huddled up, and mixed with Pluto's black head and shaggy paws till the two together looked like some monster of the Caliban type.

Mrs. Potts could tell very little more than her lord; she could only corroborate his story, and add a few items that had slipped Job's memory. She recollected the name of the village where Snowdrop said she had lived—"Wilder's End;" they had never been there, nor heard of it except from the child, but she was very clear about the name of the place and the woman she lived with, and "Dan," whoever he was, who had let her out and saved her from the rats.

"I think she does not remember it all so clearly now, sir," the good woman said; "she was so ill for a long time, and we have tried to keep her from thinking about anything of the sort as much as we could. You see we look upon her as our own child almost, and she was so dreadfully frightened, poor little thing, that she had almost lost her senses over it."

"The wretches! whoever they were," Mr. Fortescue said. "I thank you both very much for being so candid with me. I will make no bad use of what you have told me, believe me."

"And you won't take her away from us, sir?"

the showman's wife asked, her red lips quivering at the bare idea—"we love her so dearly."

"I shall have to find out a great deal more before I can claim the right to do that," Mr. Fortescue replied; "and if I discover all that has come into my head about her to be true, the right would not be mine, she would have nearer ties than myself. Come what may, Mrs. Potts—and I have a feeling that something will come of the marvellous likeness of this stray child to one who has been lost for years—she shall never learn to forget the friends who have been so kind to her. It is no small thing to make a Bible story true to a child's mind as you did; you see Mr. Potts has told me all about it."

Arthur Fortescue was rather a careless man in some things, but the simple fact that the showman had told him of the child's baby faith had struck him with a force and interest that a hundred sermons would not have done. He felt a respect for these poor people and their large-hearted charity, that few of his fashionable friends would have inspired. And he asked Job Potts to give him an address where he might always be found.

"It would puzzle me to do that, sir," Job replied, "seeing I am never to be found in the same place for more than a week at a time; but I am always to be heard of at the Pig and Ploughboy at Hampstead. They mostly know what part of the country I am in, and if anyone knows that he isn't far off finding me. I'm pretty well known on the road, I am."

Job spoke with a pardonable pride, and Mr. Fortescue put down the address in his pocket-book.

"You'll know the 'Pig and Ploughboy' perhaps, sir," said Job Potts.

"No, I can't say I do," was the smiling reply, "your town residence perhaps?"

"No, sir, we've no residence, the missis and me, but the caravan here; it's just a public kept by a mate of mine who used to work side by side with me. A giant and a dwarf and a spotted boy his show was, and the dwarf he died and left him a pot of money; he'd saved for many a year, had little Nebuchadnezzar, as we used to call him, and he left Bill Franks enough to start a tavern. It's not quite such a grand place as Jack Straw's Castle, or the like of that, but it's a decent house, and no one need be ashamed to go there. It's just off—"

Mr. Fortescue never heard exactly where the public house in question was situated, for here Jeremiah interrupted his master by getting up with a shout that was more like a howl, and tumbling over Pluto, in his haste to get to the door.

"What's to do now?" asked Mr. Potts, angrily; "can't you mind what you are doing, stupid?"

"It was the man, sir," Jeremiah gasped, "he's gone."

"What man?"

"Looking in at the door, sir; it must have been a ghost."

"Rubbish! if there was anything there it was no ghost; ghosts don't come about us much, we raise 'em for ourselves."

"Then 'twas a thief," persisted Jeremiah, whoever it was, he was after no good. It was a wild, white face, with shining eyes like flames, and there was a hand, and a ring."

"You've had a nightmare after all that supper, that's about what you've had, my lad," the showman said. "There's been no one here but me and this gentleman. Go to bed and sleep it off, that's my advice."

But whatever Jeremiah had seen was very real to him, and he would not take his master's advice till he had been down and looked all about the carriage, and amongst the other booths, for the fancied intruder. He could find nothing; but Pluto corroborated his story of someone having been there, by barking with all his might, and expressing his uneasiness by many a scrape and scratch at the door.

To talk any more was impossible, and in the midst of the hubbub Mr. Fortescue bade Job Potts adieu, and departed.

Full of retrospective thought he walked swiftly away, but found he had lost himself in the mazes of the shows. The canvas erections were all so much alike that they deceived him, and he found himself once more at the back of Professor Eglantine's dwelling. A man was leaning against a hurdle a little way off, looking up at the closed door and drawn curtains, as if undecided whether to knock and rouse the inmates or not.

They had all retired, or at any rate had shut out all visitors for the night. Jeremiah had not been dreaming then, for there was the diamond ring; Arthur Fortescue could see it flashing in the moonlight as the hand of the stranger grasped the hurdle he was leaning against. There was the pale face and the wild eyestoo—a face in which something like fear was the predominant expression; and Mr. Fortescue rubbed his eyes and pinched himself to make sure that he was not dreaming, for the silent watcher was Lord Wrexham.

He started as the footstep came close; and the two men faced each other.

"You here?" said his lordship, with a laugh that sounded forced; "I thought you were gone."

"I tried to go, but these confounded shadows deceived me, and I have been walking in a circle and come back to my starting-point. We have both the same fancies, it seems."

"As how?"

"A fancy for seeing what these wandering tribes are like after business is over. I have been paying quite an interesting visit amongst them."

"And asking questions?" Lord Wrexham said excitedly. "What about?"

"About everything connected with their business, I think," Arthur Fortescue answered. A pretty little girl attracted me this morning, and—"

"Yes, little Snowdrop, I heard her name. Who is she, what is she? what brings her here with that face and those eyes?"

The words were so hurriedly and so excitedly spoken, that the younger man stared at the other in amazement. Was Lord Wrexham going mad? he asked himself, or had he been drinking. His acquaintance with him and his handsome wife was only recent, but he had never heard that he was either eccentric or a lover of his cups.

"You had better ask the showman himself, my lord," he said; "he seems a good fellow enough, and I dare say will give you all the information you want. Are you going my way?"

"Yes, back to the Grange. We have been for a walk together, if my lady says anything; I don't want her to think that I have been hanging about the shows like a great schoolboy. She does not know—there are reasons—"

He broke off again suddenly, like a man who has been drinking, or is not quite steady in his head. "There must be a craze in the family," Mr. Fortescue thought; "by Jove, perhaps that will account for what I have heard of his lordship's silence and depression. Madne—hat's it, he's mad as a March hare to night, I should think. Why should he want to know about that child? what is she to him, or any body like her? Who does he think she is like? Good heavens! can it be possible that he was the man? If I thought so—I—"

"What did you say?" asked Lord Wrexham suddenly, for Arthur Fortescue had well nigh uttered his last thought aloud.

"Nothing," the young man replied. "I was going to ask you, my lord, but perhaps it is a rude question—Who it is that you think that little show child resembles?"

Lord Wrexham had recovered himself by this time, and resumed his usual manner. He looked at his friend with an amused face as he answered him. His momentary passion, whatever it was, had quite passed away.

"I think, my dear fellow," he said—"I don't think anything, it was one of the ladies that started my fancy. They say, to my wife's

great disgust, that the child is very like our little Laura. I don't know that I saw it myself, but my head ached so confoundedly in that hot booth that I was thankful to get out and breathe the fresh air down by the river yonder. I am decidedly out of sorts. I fancy that Warwickshire does not agree with me."

He walked away after a word or two more, and Arthur Fortescue watched him with an uneasy feeling at his heart that he could not account for. The interview had left an unpleasant feeling behind it, a sense of something hidden; and he had a curious dread on him as he followed his lordship in the direction of Avon Grange.

"Is there a secret in that man's life, I wonder?" he said to himself. "And if there is, has it to do with my lost darling? If it has, Lord Wrexham, look to yourself. For as I am a living man, and you have wronged her, she shall be avenged to the very utmost."

## CHAPTER VIII.

LORD WREXHAM was ill. Mr. Fortescue came to understand that the next morning, and that doubtless was the cause of his strange conduct. He had so violent a headache that he was obliged to keep his room, and his intention, if he had any, of enquiring any further into the history of the little girl at the show was completely frustrated. Indeed, his indisposition seemed at one period of the day quite alarming, and Lady Wrexham insisted on sending for the nearest medical man.

It wore itself out, however, and Lord Wrexham's good constitution and strong will triumphed over it, so that towards evening he was able to talk to his wife, and thank his friends for their solicitude. He was subject to intolerable headaches, he declared, though this was the first time they had any of them heard of it, and there was nothing to be alarmed at; he looked pale and woe-begone after the pain; like a man with one foot in the grave, his host declared, at which he laughed, and said he hoped to keep both his feet out of the grave for many a day to come.

The next day he made his way to the show ground as soon as he could get out to find it empty and deserted. He was not well enough acquainted with the habits of the nomadic races to be aware that they as often as not travelled by night and made their way from one town to another under cover of the darkness; nor could he guess that what had occurred the night he encountered Arthur Fortescue outside Job Potts' caravan had led the latter to alter his usual route and strike away across the country in a totally different direction from the one he intended.

His route had all been mapped out; he was going to work through Staffordshire and the black country generally, an Eldorado to show-folks in the good old times, before enterprise and the railways brought all sorts of wonderful sights within reach of them; but he could afford to lose a little of the money that he might make, and go on a quieter tour in a different part of the country.

"We'll go the other way, wife," he said, after he had thought the matter over. "We'll strike off towards London, and we'll get there as quick as we can, and then we'll work through Kent, down and up, and back into Surrey and thereaway. I've no fancy for being followed about and questioned. I don't so much mind that young fellow, but there are others; it was no ghost that Jeremiah saw."

"Law, Job! who was it?"

"I don't know; I only fancy—I'm growing fanciful maybe—I think it was that long-faced chap that was with them all in the afternoon; he went out before we had done, but I saw him staring at the little 'un as if he would like to eat her, and he had a white face and wild eyes and a diamond ring; I saw it."

"Well, you are clever, Job; you can make a lot out of a little," Mrs. Potts said admiringly. "You can put two and two together; I should never have thought of all that."

"I have to keep my eyes open, my dear," Mr. Potts replied, with honest pride in his own acuteness; "the world would be too sharp for me else. Of course I may be mistaken, but I shouldn't like to lose the little 'un now."

"Lose her! no; but you told the young gentleman that—"

"The young gentleman came in an honest straightforward sort of fashion," Job said, knitting his brows as he spoke; "and he up and said what he wanted as a man should; he didn't come sneaking and prying about a person's doorstep in the dark, and vanishing away like a ghost when he was seen."

"I say, old man, you have nothing but what Jeremiah said to go upon, and he's always seeing something ridiculous."

"I saw him myself, wife."

"When?"

"Afterwards. He was standing leaning on the hurries yonder and staring at our place; I came in and put the light out, and I hope he liked it."

So this was how it came about that little Snowdrop and her protectors were heard of no more on the line of route that had been mapped out for them; and that when Lord Wrexham managed to get unnoticed to the ground where the shows had been held, he found nothing but the dismal traces of wandering life that a fair always leaves behind it.

He went back to Avon Grange discomfited and disappointed. He had made up his mind to talk to Job Potts, and lo! he had disappeared—on purpose, as it seemed.

Their visit to their Warwickshire friends had come to an end with the races, and the morrow was fixed for their leaving. They were to go to Ventnor, where they had a seat, and there his lordship declared he should recover his health and spirits, though he tried to laugh, and deny that there was anything the matter with him in that respect.

Lady Wrexham suggested asking some of their friends who had helped to make the time pass pleasantly at the Grange to come and visit them at Overcliff, as their house was called, and proposed to invite Mr. Fortescue amongst the number. Her husband negotiated the proposition at once.

"Why won't you have him?" she asked.

"I did not go so far as to say I wouldn't have him, my dear," he replied, "but I would rather not—I don't like him."

"Not like him! I can't imagine any one not liking Arthur Fortescue. Whatever has he done?"

"Nothing, that I know of; it is a case of Dr. Fell, I suppose. Ask whom you like else—but leave him out."

"And he is the only person who has taken the trouble to amuse me while I have been here," Lady Wrexham said, petulantly; but she did not urge the point, and they went southward to their pretty home in the Isle of Wight. They had only been there two days when Lord Wrexham went to his wife's sitting-room with an open letter in his hand.

"Will you order a room to be got ready for a gentleman, Laura," he said. "I expect him this evening."

"What gentleman? Any one I know?"

"Hardly—you have seen him. It is Mr. Sayers."

"Rupert! are you mad?"

"What do you mean?"

"To ask that man here."

"I am not mad, that I know of. He is my lawyer, and is coming on business and will be my guest."

"Let him sleep at the hotel; he can hardly expect to be received in your house."

"He does expect it, and it will be so. He comes here as my guest."

"But not as mine. You can entertain him as you please—I will not sit down to table with him."

"I cannot understand your prejudice, Laura—Mr. Sayers has never done anything to offend you, and I must insist that the attentions due to my guest are paid to him; it may mean ruin if you disobey me in this."

Lady Wrexham looked at her husband as if she thought he had gone suddenly mad. It was almost the first time he had ever used the word *obey* to her since their marriage, and she knew from the tone of his voice that he was in very terrible earnest.

"Do you mean you have been trusting this man with money affairs?" she asked. "Does he hold our fortunes in his hand that I am to receive him like a prince?"

"Yes" was the short reply, and in such a tone that Lady Wrexham, annoyed as she was, could not say any more. There were times when her husband was unapproachable, and this was one of them. She had let the time for winning his confidence slip past her, and she could not regain it.

"I don't believe it," she said to herself, when her lord had left the room; "Rupert always looks on the darkest side of everything. I suppose he has given something into this man's hands, and has brooded over it till it has assumed gigantic proportions in his imagination. Ah! well, I suppose I must be civil to the fellow."

She was civil, courteous, as she knew well how to be when she chose; and Mr. Sayers, whatever his business at Overcliff might be, made himself and his presence as little offensive as was possible to the mistress of the house. He was shrewd enough to see that she regarded him with suspicion, and he guessed that she had no knowledge of his business under her husband's roof. He was not a gentleman, he was many degrees removed from the possibility of such an accusation, but he had tact enough to copy the manners of those with whom he came in contact, and to be quiet when ignorant—so that he passed muster, and even gained the reputation of being a very useful and pleasant person in a house party.

"Her ladyship knows nothing, I suppose?" he said to Lord Wrexham, when he was established at Overcliff.

"No."

"She has never heard?"

"Not that I am aware of; indeed I may say I am sure she has not."

"You would know it if she had," the lawyer said, significantly; "women never can hold their tongues when they consider themselves aggrieved, and she would do so, of course."

"We will leave her name out of the discussion, if you please," Lord Wrexham said, somewhat haughtily. "If I had my time to go over again I should tell her everything; I have left it too long now to undo the mistake."

"You would be a fool for your pains," the lawyer said to himself. "If I measure your lady up aright, she is the veriest tartar that ever stepped—a nice life you would lead of it, my lord, if you did tell her."

Aloud he only remarked quietly: "We all think we act for the best, my lord, and I am of opinion that you did so in this instance. Lady Wrexham—"

"We will not talk about her, if you please, we will keep to the matter in hand; my wife knows nothing, and she must not know—nor any one else."

"Except your lordship and myself. Very good, my lord; it can be done, but it will cost money."

"I am prepared for that."

"And I shall have to employ certain instruments, who, on their part, need know nothing."

"Very good."

"And Lady Wrexham must make up her mind to receive me sometimes, wherever she happens to be, if I have business with your lordship."

"Of course."

"And to be kind enough to take a little notice of Mrs. Sayers, if I want it. It is necessary sometimes that my wife should go into society."

Lord Wrexham winced a little, but he replied calmly enough:

"Lady Wrexham's visiting list is very full, but I will see what can be done when we go back to town."



## CHAPTER IX.

LADY WREXHAM was not called upon to exercise her hospitality in the case of Mrs. Sayers at present. The lawyer disappeared from Overcliff after a short stay, and she heard no more of him. Her husband was pre-occupied as usual, and looked ill, but that was nothing new, and he did not interfere with her amusements, or those of her guests, so she forbore to plague him with questions.

She came across a piece of a torn letter one day, which exercised her mind considerably, but she could make nothing of it. It was from Mr. Sayers, for she knew that gentleman's handwriting; he had offered to write her a set of *menu* cards while he had been Lord Wrexham's guest, and she had been obliged to admit that whatever objection there was to the lawyer as a guest, he wrote beautifully.

He was one of those men who seem to have the gift of writing like copper-plate; his letters always looked like lithographs, and the most careless scribble from his pen would have done for a writing master's specimen. There was not much in the paper that Lady Wrexham found to alarm or annoy any one, but she could not understand it, and she was consequently suspicious.

"We have not come across the missing article yet, but we are on the track; when we have settled the matter, would suggest America or Australia, but will see you about it first."

What article was the lawyer searching for that her husband was interested in? She took it into her head that Mr. Sayers was leading Rupert into some speculation that was dangerous, and hated him accordingly. Lawyers always were at the bottom of ruinous speculations, and she worried herself about it till she could bear her fancies no longer, and carried them once more to her own man of business and old friend.

"There's something secret going on, Mr. Charlotte," she said, despairingly; "I feel as if I should go mad if I could not find out what it is."

The old lawyer looked at her gravely, and answered her seriously.

"You always were impetuous, Lady Wrexham," he said. "If I were you I would let this business alone."

"I can't, I feel sure there is a woman in it; it can be nothing else, he would keep nothing else from me."

"Oh yes; he would, anything that he thought would vex or annoy you. I think you may have more faith in him than to suspect him of faithlessness in any vulgar fashion. Do what I advised you to do last time we spoke on this subject; go to him and tell him his silence hurts you and ask him for the truth; you will get it, my dear."

"No, it is too late for that."

"Then leave it alone. If it is anything you ought to know he will tell you—and he would have told me," he added to himself, but he did not hint at his thought to Lady Wrexham.

Mr. Charlotte was a clever man, and an astute lawyer, and he felt as she did that no good was meant by the Earl's sudden intimacy with a man of Mr. Sayers' standing in the profession. There was underhand work to be done, or he would not have been selected to do it, and he tried in vain to guess what it could possibly be. Lord Wrexham was of stainless character; he had been singularly free from all the vices, small and great, that so many young men are conspicuous for, and the most suspicious person could not have accused him of any private gallantries. It was a money matter of some sort, doubtless, and Mr. Charlotte shrugged his shoulders and sighed as he thought of what might happen to any one who got into such notably unscrupulous hands as those of Mr. Sayers of Grey's inn.

Lady Wrexham took his advice and went to her husband directly.

"Perhaps he will tell me," she said to herself, "and if he won't, well—I shall know what to think."

"I want you to tell me something, Rupert,"

she said to him, when she had succeeded in catching him alone. "Will you answer me a question?"

"That depends on what it is, my dear; if I can I will, and if I cannot I will say so."

"What is the secret between you and that man Sayers?"

Lord Wrexham looked at his wife, and she saw a look of perplexity and annoyance flit over his face. It was gone in an instant, but it had been there.

"What makes you think there is any secret?"

"This!" and her ladyship produced the piece of torn paper.

"It was thrown on the floor, so I had a right to read it. What is the 'article' that he is to find for you? This way of putting it is only a blind."

"You jump to conclusions quickly, Laura."

"Is it any wonder that I do?" she said angrily, "when all sorts of mysterious things are going on around me, and I am asked to be on intimate terms with a man that I am ashamed to see sit down in my husband's presence. Tell me one thing, Rupert—I will know it—is it a woman you are seeking? Is there any shameful secret of that sort? Because—"

"Stop, Laura; do not say any more," Lord Wrexham said, rather wearily, as if the subject pained him. "If you choose to call a business matter between a lawyer and myself a shameful secret, I cannot help it; you must do so. I cannot tell you what it is, but I will tell you this much, that you wrong me and degrade yourself by your suspicions. There is no woman in the case. It is, as I tell you, a matter of business, nearly affecting your interest and mine, and Laura's."

It was nothing but money then, after all, and she was rather ashamed of herself; but none the less eager to find it out.

"Whatever it is, it is costing you a great deal of money," she said, sulkily.

"It is, and will cost more yet before—"

"Before I shall be safe," he was going to say, but he checked himself in time.

"Before what?" she asked.

"Before what Sayers is doing is completed," was all his reply; "and I don't know when that will be."

"And am I to allow him to come here and call himself a friend of yours, as I did one day, for an indefinite time?" she asked, ruefully.

"I am afraid so."

She changed her tactics after this, and tried what she could do with Mr. Sayers himself. But if Lord Wrexham was difficult, the lawyer was ten times worse. He answered her blandly and with apparent frankness, but she was as far off knowing anything at the end of their conversation as she was at the beginning.

Mr. Sayers left Overcliff very well satisfied indeed with the result of his visit there; Lady Wrexham had not been very civil, but he had gained a footing there, and mixed with the titled and aristocratic guests on something like a familiar footing.

"It's all right, poppet," he said to his wife when he was once more in the retirement of his own home. "You'll have an invitation to the Earl's house yet."

"Law, Dick, you don't say so!" Mrs. Sayers replied. "How on earth have you managed it?"

Mrs. Sayers thought herself a very great personage amongst her own familiar friends, and was apt to give herself little airs, that pleased herself and did not hurt anyone else: she had hardly the repose of manner that marks the lady born and bred, and that was what she wanted all strangers to believe her to be; but she and her lord had begun life in a very humble fashion when he was only a clerk and she a dressmaker, going out to work at a house of business for eighteenpence a day and her dinner.

She had been a pretty girl in those days, and she was a comely woman enough still, though somewhat of the florid order, and she was proud of her rise in the world, and her husband's cleverness. She had a smart house in a genteel road in Brixton, and smart furniture and dresses; she could not understand the

luxury of seeing things grow old in her service or the delight of an old chair that holds out its gouty arms like an old friend, though it is shaky and rickety and shabby to the last degree.

She never had any associations with faded articles; she would have been sadly troubled if her furniture had not all looked costly and new, and glittery from excessive cleaning. Even the little back room Mr. Sayers called his library, though there were not many books there, and a great many shoes and pipes, partook of the general newness; Mrs. Sayers had invaded it, and recovered and stuffed and varnished till it matched the rest of the house.

Yet she liked her comforts well enough, and shook off the attempted fine lady, and was very unconventional and commonplace when they were alone.

"How did you manage it, Dick?" she repeated after a pause, during which her husband was making his pipe draw. "I have always heard that her ladyship is that haughty and—"

"And so she is."

"Going out again to-night, Dick?" she asked, as her husband, after he had rested himself a little prepared to set forth.

"Yes. I may be late, don't wait for me; don't look so glum, it's about this new business. There's money in it, think of that, when it interferes, as it may, with your pleasure sometimes. I'm going round to Scrivener's."

Scrivener was Mr. Sayers' man-of-all-work; a broken down, disappointed, forgotten man, but as keen as any sleuth hound, and with a memory that never forgot a face or a voice, and an eye like a hawk's for sharpness of vision. Ten years before there had not been a cleverer or more appreciated officer in the detective force of Scotland Yard than Alfred Scrivener; all great cases were given into his hands, and woe to the thief that he was ordered to track and bring down. His adventures would have filled a book, and the renown of his captures had reached America, from where overtures had come to entice him into the service of the States.

In an evil hour he came to grief. A mysterious robbery of shares and bonds, and papers which meant money in various ways was discovered, and Alfred Scrivener had no hand in the letting in of the light on the black business. It was not for some days that it was rumoured that he himself had been cognisant of the frauds, but presently London was electrified by the news of his arrest. He was imprisoned for a term and then set at liberty, to mend his broken fortunes as best he might—a broken disappointed, hopeless man.

He could not get back to the place he had lost. The brand of the prison was on him, and Mr. Sayers came across him starving, as a copyist to some wholesale law stationer. He was the very man the lawyer wanted, clever, not too scrupulous, and sufficiently careless of self to be ready to do anything, and he had offered him a living there and then—an offer that was accepted gladly, and ever since Scrivener had been his right hand man.

Mr. Sayers thought of all this as he drove along in his hansom.

He found his man at home, and when they were alone at once plunged into business.

"You'll have to turn out, and that's a fact," the lawyer said. "I've no one I can trust with the business but you, and—"

"I am always at your service, of course," Scrivener said, meekly; "and business won't keep two hours when it is anything particular and secret."

"And this is both; it's that affair of Lord Wrexham's."

Scrivener's eye brightened a little as Mr. Sayers spoke; it was like an old war horse sparkling up at the sound of a trumpet call. There was a mystery to be solved, and a secret to be kept, and he was all alert at once.

"What is to be done in it, sir?"

"Proof of everything to be found, and then—"

"And then?"

"Well then, there's just the difficulty; the child is to be disposed of."

"You don't mean—"

"Bless your soul, no. Got rid of; taken away where she will never be heard of any more; thrown amongst people who will never know anything about her and all that. I may have to send you abroad, Scrivener, perhaps to America, or Australia, or Japan, or wherever we fix upon."

"I hope not, sir; I devoutly hope not."

"Why?"

"Because she is dying, sir. I've feared it for this many a long day, and I know it now. If I went for any length of time, I should only find a grave in the churchyard when I came back, and it would break her heart. I have well nigh broken it once already—my poor girl!"

"Well, well! we'll see," Mr. Sayers said, "I was only suggesting what might have to be done; that step is some way off yet, and perhaps—"

He would not add that perhaps Mrs. Scrivener might die soon enough to relieve her husband of any anxiety about leaving her, but that was his thought, and the words had very nearly left his lips. Scrivener's transient emotion had passed in a minute, and he was himself once more, almost before Mr. Sayers had done speaking, cold and imperturbable as he used to be in the old police days. There had been a pained, wrung expression as he jerked his head in the direction of the little kitchen where his wife had retreated when the lawyer came in, and a choke in his voice as he spoke of her. But they were gone now, and he was prepared to hear what was wanted of him.

"What is the first move, sir?" he asked quietly.

"To find Bill Jones, the ex-pugilist and showman—where is he likely to be on a Saturday night?"

"I know where he's to be heard of, sir."

"Where?"

"At the Crow's Nest, a tavern in the Borough."

Mr. Sayers only nodded assent, then left with instructions to bring the man quietly to his house at once.

"You must find him and to-night," he said—"I want to see him."

Scrivener was as good as his word, and the worthy Bill Jones was soon closeted with the lawyer, and whatever his business it was very satisfactory, for to his wife's surprise he went home sober and with a ten-pound note. He left her some money for food, poor soul, went and bought himself some very needful clothes, and then returned home early, to the great astonishment of his better-half, and went out no more that night.

The next morning he started early, by making cautious inquiries learned where Professor Eglantine and Snowdrop were. To find them out promptly and secretly and carry off the child had been the instruction of Mr. Sayers, and he was to spare no trouble or expense, nor leave no stone unturned to succeed, and succeed he did, and sooner than he had hoped.

Almost unvaried success had attended the Professor and his wife since they had left the Midland Counties; everywhere the child's beauty and grace, and the respectable manner in which the exhibition was conducted, drew people who never went to such places to visit the Professor's establishment, and little Snowdrop was much talked of. The talent of second sight was in its infancy then; memory study was not so well understood as it is now, and the child's performances, the result of careful training and great natural quickness of ear and mind, seemed to the simple people who for the most part formed her audiences, something more than natural.

She never seemed tired; she revealed all sorts of marvellous secrets with a word, and she could read words she had never seen with her eyes bandaged, and tell what ladies wore whom her father touched, when it was utterly impossible she could see what he was alluding to. They were now at Camelford and to

Camelford went Mr. Jones, who had heard of their whereabouts from a rival showman.

## CHAPTER X.

CAMELFORD is an old-world place, with a flavour of legends and superstitions in its very atmosphere, and the inhabitants are quiet, easy-going people, content to live their lives far away from the busy world and its many cares, and finding their amusements in sedate local gatherings and occasional fairs.

Even the clergyman of the parish, a large-minded, pleasant man, who liked to be amused and to see every side of human nature, patronised the entertainment, and the town followed him like a flock of sheep. The party from the Vicarage consisted of the clergyman and his family and his brother, many years younger than himself, who was on a visit. He was a surgeon in very fair practice now at Launceston, but he had had a struggle for many years of his life to establish a footing in the profession. He had married lately and was introducing his wife, a pretty, lady-like young woman, to her new relations.

The party were much interested, and as usual all anxious to see the child nearer and question her about her wonderful attainments.

Snowdrop's answers were not quite satisfactory, and the clergyman put some further questions to her, but, suddenly, he broke off with, "What are you doing, Felton?"

It was to his brother he spoke. The surgeon had come up to them while he was questioning the little girl, and had taken sudden hold of her shoulder.

"Nothing," was the brief reply, and Felton Somers let the child go with a puzzled expression of face.

"Are those your father and mother?" he asked her abruptly.

"All I ever had, sir," she said.

"H'm, I see. Where did they get her from, I wonder? It is that child I am certain."

"Whatever made you stay talking to that showman?" Mr. Somers said to his brother as they were going home.

I did want to know where the fellow got that child from. She isn't his own child, you know."

"No, I don't know, but I gathered from what she said to me that she was not. Did you get the information you wanted?"

"No."

"And why did you want it?"

"Because I am puzzled. I have seen the child before."

"Where?"

"At a very early period of her existence. That little girl is one of my children."

The elder Mr. Somers laughed at this amazing statement.

"That has an awful sound," he said; "you mean professionally, of course?"

"Yes, I presided at her entrance into the world. I have told you the story before now."

"What, the Norfolk episode?"

"Yes."

"And you think this is the child?"

"Think! I am as sure of it as I can be; I only saw the mother's face when it was drawn with pain and white from exhaustion, but its wonderful beauty, and the marvellous eyes are reproduced in the child; and besides, there is the mark; no two children could have that."

"And you never found out who those people were?"

"Never: they came and went in a night, and the body was removed; there was plenty of money wherever it came from. It was the only bit of luck I had in that confounded wilderness."

"Hush, Felton."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, I always forget the atmosphere of sanctity that ought to surround this place; but the very remembrance of my experience in the wilds of Norfolk is enough to make a saint swear, let alone a somewhat short-tempered mortal."

"Ah, well, come to dinner now, and you can

pursue your investigations to-morrow; these people are going to stay another day."

"There's mischief brewing, wife."

"Lor, Job, what do you mean?"

"There's something going on. I've had another cove asking me questions enough to make a man's hair stand on end about Snowdrop; see's a likeness, he does. She can't be like all o'creation."

"She's just like her own dear little self, and no one else that I know of," answered Mrs. Potts, who had just put Snowdrop to bed. "I wouldn't worry about it if I were you, Job; talking won't take her away from us."

"Talking means something very often," Mr. Potts replied gravely; "I suppose I take fright quick. Tell Jeremiah not to stir away from here while we are away; I feel as if everything was going wrong somehow."

"Bless me, and we've had such a splendid day," Mrs. Potts said. "You can't be well, Job."

"Perhaps I am not, but I hate to be asked all sorts of things that I don't choose to tell; come along, those shops will be shut up if you don't make haste."

Jeremiah was duly admonished not to stir from the steps of the caravan till his master and mistress returned, and they knew they could trust him to obey where Snowdrop was concerned; his love for her was almost idolatry, and she was very fond of her uncouth adorer. It was dark, for the year was well advanced, and the ground was almost deserted. The people were in their movable homes resting themselves for the most part, and only a few idlers were about. One of these presently came up to Jeremiah where he sat.

"Master in?" he asked.

"No he ain't," was the short reply.

"Ah, that's a pity. I wanted to see him, I'll wait about, how long will he be?"

"An hour, I daresay."

"Come and have a glass then; I must see him to night."

Jeremiah was tempted, but faithful withal. "I can't stir an inch," he said; "I have to mind the house, and her."

"The child?"

"Yes."

"Don't stir then, we'll have our glass all the same; I'll fetch it from the house yonder."

There was a tavern in sight and the stranger repaired thither. Jeremiah saw him go in and come out again with the liquor in his hand, and presently the two were sitting on the steps together drinking out of the same can. Jeremiah had so far relaxed his sentinel duty as to fetch two glasses out of the carriage.

Suddenly Jeremiah's glass fell from his hand and he rolled off the step where he was sitting and lay an insensible heap on the ground.

"Gracious! Job, what's that?"

Mrs. Potts had stumbled over the prostrate form of Jeremiah, and was only saved from measuring her length on the ground by the strong arm of her husband.

"It's a man," she added when she had recovered her equilibrium. "Get up, do."

Her anger was changed to consternation when she saw who it was; their faithful servant had never betrayed his trust before, and she rushed up into the caravan for a light. The striking of a match revealed more mischief: Pluto so nearly strangled that he could only whine pitifully and hang out his poor tongue all bitten and bleeding from his frantic efforts to escape. To cut the cord that bound him was the work of a minute, and then he sprang into Snowdrop's bed and showed them that it was empty with a melancholy howl. The child was gone, and there was no trace of her or of the thief who had robbed them so cleverly of their treasure.

(To be continued.)

True goodness is like the glow-worm; it shines most when no eyes save those of heaven are upon it.



## A SUMMER DAY.

Oh, perfect day in summer time!  
I see the purple shadows climb  
The peaceful hills as down the west  
The sun goes journeying to his rest.  
While all the valley at my feet  
Is wrapped in calm as deep and sweet  
As that which in my fancy lies  
About the peaks of Paradise;  
And softly to my heart I say,  
Is heaven more fair than earth to-day?

The sky has seemed, the whole day through,  
Like a great violet overturned.  
I like sunshine filtering through its blue,  
While idle, dreaming, unconcerned,  
I lay among the grass and heard  
The cricket chirp, and talk of bird,  
And saw the clouds sail softly by  
Between me and the great clear sky,  
Like argosies our heart sent out  
To find the treasures dreamed about.

No discord mars the soft sweet air  
To which is set this day so rare!  
A poem from the hand of Heaven  
So seldom to poor mortals given.  
But yet so bright so passing fair  
I read it, hear it everywhere;  
And I, who am not learned, nor wise  
In lore which many scholars prize,  
Have talked with Nature as a friend  
Whose love I fully comprehend.

And such strange things as she has told!  
The secret of the sunshine's gold;  
The mystery of the growing corn;  
How roses break apart at morn;  
What the wind whispers to the pine;  
Ah, all these mysteries are mine.  
But I may never tell to you  
What I have heard. Your ear must be  
Laid close against her heart so true  
To understand each mystery.

E. E. R.

## SWEET INISFAIL.

## A ROMANCE.

By the Author of "The Mystery of Killard, &amp;c."

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE COTTAGE UNDER THE QUARRY.

WHEN George Manton met Fitzgerald the evening of his arrival from Dublin, he found the latter in the highest spirits and the best of humour. Everything had gone capitally with him during the brief absence of the other. All to whom he had spoken of the sale agreed with him that he could not have hoped for nearly so much money as he had got for Tobrochny. Flynn, the attorney, was with all possible haste getting the documents for the sale ready, and at the same time preparing a marriage settlement.

Fitzgerald had expected to find George Manton in spirits almost corresponding with his own. In this he was disappointed, for although George seemed to have been relieved of some imminent danger, there was still a look of pre-occupation and anxiety on his face. It was close to the dinner hour when they met at the hotel. At first the talk was nearly all about Fitzgerald's affairs. The owner of Tobrochny told his guest that within less than a month Flynn hoped to have everything in readiness.

"And, old fellow," said Fitzgerald, catching his friend by the hand, "I have not forgotten you quite. Half-way down that glen close to the Slate Quarries, and very near the point which you admire so much, there is a small cottage, which I, once upon a time, was allowed to use as a kind of fishing hut by my old grand-uncle—a privilege which he withdrew from me of late years. I do not know what is in it now. Long ago there used to be a table and a few chairs and a couple of beds in it. It has four rooms, each about the size of a hand-

box. It used to be in the charge of an old man who lived at the village, but what condition it or the furniture is in now I do not know. It belongs to no land, and is no earthly use to any one. Therefore, my dear George, I have an opportunity of playing my Lord Bountiful without taking sixpence out of my pocket. I have told Flynn to draw up a document by which you will become owner of that magnificent mansion, whither you are to come with your wife and child for a month's holiday every year. You see I am going to settle down here now (Agnes and I have been talking about a house we should both like to get), and as I shall be very little in London for the future, I should have little chance of seeing you, unless you were obliged, as a good landlord, to visit your Irish estate at least once a year. The estate, exclusive of the manor house, consists of land about forty feet long by eighty feet wide, upon which the largest and most luxuriant boulders grow in great profusion, and to such enormous dimensions that they carry off all the prizes at the local agricultural shows."

Fitzgerald rattled off this speech with such pauseless fluency that he gave Manton no opportunity of interpolating a word, and he was quite out of breath when he reached the end of it.

"But," said Manton, when the other had finished, "you have really done too much already. I cannot consent to accept this."

"You have broken your compact, sir," said Fitzgerald, with a smile. "According to your agreement with me, you were not to have referred to that other transaction. You may refuse my offer of this manor and this estate as a gift; but, sir, I now impose it upon you as a penalty for having broken your compact, and if you say another word about it I will make Flynn draw up a deed of gift of Tobrochny in your favour, buy a revolver, and go out prospecting California."

"Upon my word, Fitzgerald, you are over-masterful; however, I suppose I had better hold my tongue."

"Now, to be business-like, George, what I suggest to you is this. You have a little time on your hands now. You are the owner of an Irish estate and mansion; amuse yourself and distract your mind from its recent troubles by doing up that mansion a bit, making it habitable, and thinking how pleasant it will be next year when you and your wife and boy come over here and entertain Agnes and me with trout from the stream and mellow boulders grown upon your own land."

The two friends did not sit late that evening. Fitzgerald had promised to spend an hour at the West Gate; and Manton, saying he felt tired, went early to bed, but he found that, tired as he was, sleep would not come at his command.

For an hour he lay wakeful and restless. He tried to reach the shores of oblivion by banishing all thoughts, fears, anxieties, anticipations, from his mind; but the mere effort to do this was so great that it destroyed all chance of his going to sleep. Then he gave up all hope of closing his eyes, and lay awake staring at the white ceiling. Gradually the sounds of the street died away, feet ceased to pass to and fro along the corridor, and profound silence reigned over all.

His thoughts were far from soothing, and yet he could not clearly define what he feared. True, the worst seemed over. He had got back those terrible bills, and the immediate fear of beggary, exposure, and disgrace had been averted. Out of these bills could come to him no new harm, and the old harm had been laid for ever. He knew his brother was an unprincipled man; but he had Frederick's solemn promise that he would never do anything of the kind, that he would never forge George's name to any document again. Beyond this George had extracted no promise of him, and he knew Frederick well enough to feel assured that he would not feel himself bound even to his brother beyond the exact letter of his promise. What new

villainy that miscreant brother might be guilty of he could not forecast. Ever since that dreadful affair at Walsingham he had lost all hope of his brother, and when, after a disappearance of many years, Frederick wrote to him from Clonmore, George thought all was over with him, and that a catastrophe could not be averted a week. But week had succeeded week, and nothing unpleasant occurred. It was almost a year after his brother's return to England that the forgery was committed, and from that day to this George Manton never knew what a peaceful moment was.

Now these forged bills had been taken away for ever, and could never be used against him again; but was the position greatly changed, after all? It is true that the criminal aspect of the affair had disappeared; but then he owed Fitzgerald a thousand pounds, and at fifty pounds a year it would take twenty years to pay it.

Twenty years was a long time, and a thousand pounds was a large sum for a man with three hundred and fifty pounds a year. No; he could not wait twenty years to discharge this debt. However he managed it, he should be free before that time. By pinching and scraping they could live on two hundred a year, and this would enable him to pay the debt off in seven years. But what a dreary outlook it was, to think of living all that time on half-salary! Had he known anything of this kind was coming on, he would not have married. It was bad enough that he should have to endure the loss of this money, and the poverty necessary for paying it back; but he had no right to accept this poverty on his wife's behalf, and it did seem hard, it did seem almost intolerable, that Helen, who knew nothing of this matter till a few days ago, should be reduced from the homely comforts of Doncaster Street to the position it would be necessary for them to take when they had to live on half their present income.

He could not hope that in the next ten years the Society would advance his salary by a hundred pounds. So that, upon the whole, he was almost as thoroughly ruined as though Isaacs had sold his furniture and he had lost his situation; for if he had left the country—if he had gone away to the United States—he could not believe but that he should be able to make more money than what would represent two hundred pounds a year in this country.

Of course, nothing could have been more generous than Fitzgerald's action with respect to the money, but then he doubted very much if it would not have been better for him to have been sold up and ruined quickly than to have to face this tedious poverty. He was not a man of strong moral fibre, and he knew it. He was not the man to face dangers or difficulties boldly, or to employ heroic measures when suffering distress. He was a moral coward, although he did not to himself admit so much. He allowed that he was weak, that he would set no unpleasant thing going if he could help it, and that all extraordinary effort or pain of any kind was regarded by him as almost unendurable evil.

At times he felt almost inclined to resent Fitzgerald's pressing of the money upon him. If Fitzgerald had not done that, all would be over with him in England in a month or so, and, putting aside the criminal aspect of the affair regarding which he was doubtful, he would have been in a much better position. For although, no doubt, he had signed those accursed bills, and thereby made himself legally liable to Isaacs for the money, he did not consider that he was morally in Isaacs' debt. But now, to the burden of the consciousness of legal debt had been added the weight of moral responsibility and the sense of obligation. It was to an unprincipled money-lender no longer that he owed this money, but to his dearest friend; and this chafed and worried him more than the dread of exposure and destruction which had haunted him a month ago. He became restless and irritable, and although he tried to

busy himself about the little cottage for a few days, he failed altogether to conquer his objection to his present position or to show more than a barely civil front to his friend.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE FORTUNE-TELLER.

It quickly spread about Cloonmore that Agnes Fail—Sweet Inisfail, as the people loved best to call her in secret—was soon to be married to Fitzgerald. The people were glad of this, for they all said that Mr. Fail was getting old, and that it would be a cruel thing if the girl were left alone in the world, and, moreover, poor—for it was well known that what Mr. Fail had died with him.

There was no jealousy among the young men of the town of Fitzgerald in his good luck. They felt that he deserved it all. They knew he was of good social position, and might if he chose, look even higher than Agnes Fail; but they were pleased to find that so popular and gifted a young man, of a good family, should select as his wife the loveliest maiden in Cloonmore.

There was nothing very stirring going on in the town at that time, and people found it gratifying and pleasant in the beautiful May weather, and the sweet, strong promise-time of the year, to talk of her and her coming lot, which, although everyone owned it might possibly have been more splendid, could scarcely, in their opinion, be more happy.

It was said that, although Agnes Fail would bring no fortune in money to her husband, she would not go to him altogether empty-handed. Beyond the liberal trousseau which the chief milliner's shop of the town had orders to prepare, there was talk of all the old man's plate being packed up in strong boxes for her new home. The father regarded her approaching marriage with sad equanimity. He knew he could not have her with him always. He knew that his time on earth could not be extended to many more years. He was an old man who looked his age boldly in the face, and when anticipating death bowed his head to the will of heaven with mournful resignation. He loved the world as a tender brother. He took an interest in the daily affairs of the homely people among whom he dwelt; he was curious to mark the onward progress of civilization in its efforts to improve the condition of man; he took a childlike wonder and delight in the subtle, forward creeping of science from point to point; he watched with eagerness the gradual unravelling of what had been the mighty mysteries of nature; and he stood lost in pious contemplation of the nobler form that day by day the expanding mind of man gave to benignant Deity.

The spirit of Agnes was too contemplative and apart to be moved greatly by the thought of her approaching marriage. She knew it would make all the difference in the world to her to be with him always; but there was a lingering and regretful tenderness when she thought of her old and feeble father left alone in that big Gate House. She had been with him all her life, and, like the people of the town, had revered him, but with a reverence born of ties of blood and a closer intimacy. He had been to her the one being intermediate between her and the world. She had no relative but him, no companions of her own age, no friends.

Fitzgerald and she had met first in her father's house, at her father's table. In that same house Fitzgerald had first made love to her. She remembered quite distinctly the first time she noticed anything peculiar in his manner. The three had been sitting in the drawing-room after tea, when the old man rose to fetch a book from the tower. Fitzgerald and she had been looking over an old album containing photographs of distinguished men and women, when they came upon an imaginary portrait of Sappho.

"If I had my choice," said she, putting her

finger on the photograph, "I should be a poet."

"Well," said he, softly, "I do not know whether you are a poet or not, but," he added, "you are better than a poet."

"How?" she said, with a smile. "What is better than a poet?"

"A poem."

"You mean to say," she said, with a puzzled look, "that I am a—"

She could not utter the word. She raised her eyes rapidly and looked at him. No one could mistake the meaning of his face. It was a mute declaration of love. She, forgetting all about the poem, and thinking only of the love which she had often heard of and saw now for the first time, dropped her eyes in a strange, sweet confusion of surprise.

"Yes, you are a poem," he said eagerly. "You are the most beautiful poem I know of. What can be nobler or dearer than your spirit? What can be more beautiful than your face?"

"Hush!" she said. "Hush! I am afraid."

"Afraid of what?" he said. "Afraid of your own spirit, of your own beauty?"

"I don't know," she whispered. "Do not talk in that way. I am afraid—desperately afraid."

She was sitting on a chair by the window and he was standing over her. He frowned at her last words. He could not understand them. He could not understand what she meant by being afraid when he had praised her goodness and her beauty.

"You are not angry with me?" he said.

"No, no," she answered.

He bent over her and placed his hand lightly on her shoulder.

"Agnes, tell me, child; tell me, dear child, of what are you afraid?"

"Of nothing in particular. It is very foolish. I shall be all right in a minute."

"Will you make me all right for all my life?" said he, stooping down and taking one of her hands.

She did not speak.

"Are you too frightened, Agnes, to answer me, or shall I ask you another time?"

"Yes," she whispered, "another time."

"And will you tell me then," he said, "whether you will give me this hand or not?"

"Yes," she answered.

"And do you know now, Agnes, what that answer will be?"

"I do," said she.

"And what will it be?"

"Yes."

He laughed out loud and joyously and long. She looked up with an expression of trouble on her face.

"What are you laughing at? At me?"

"Yes, at you."

The look of trouble on her face deepened.

"What have I done ridiculous?"

"You asked me to speak to you again on this matter, and yet you tell me what your answer will be."

"Did I?" she said, simply. "I did not know what I said. Will you forgive me?"

He laughed again.

"What are you thinking of, child? You told me you would give me this," pressing her hand slightly. He took her in his arms and kissed her. "You are not sorry, Agnes, that you said 'Yes'?"

"No," she whispered.

"And are you still afraid?"

"Yes," she answered, "but not of the same thing. I do not know what I was afraid of before—of you, I think; but now I know what I am afraid of."

"What?"

"That you will some day be sorry I said 'Yes.'"

Now she was about to leave that house for ever; that house which was the scene of all her earliest memories; that house in which she had long lain at death's door and come back to life and health by slow, delicate, delicious stages; that house in which she had first met her lover and first known love.

But to overcome this uneasy sense of parting with the past was a necessity for taking some account of the future. She tried to fancy what their new home would be; the daily routine of their home; his coming in and going out, with the dear frequency, and dearer indifference, of settled habits of love and placed confidence. But it was not easy to make the events of the future seem as real as those of the past. And, although it was possible to spend hours and days in delicious dreaming, the ideas of the future wanted sharpness in the lines and clearness in the light.

One day the four made up a party and went on an excursion to the famous Rag Well Glen. There it is the custom to hang a piece of cloth of some kind on a thorn bush that grows hard by a well. Whether the superstition is that good may come of the act, or evil be avoided, is not clear. But the custom is locally carried out, and no one thinks of going to this well without bringing some fragment of cloth to hang upon the bush. At this well is to be found an old gap-toothed woman who has a couple of common delf mugs, and treats those who visit the well to draughts of its sparkling waters. This is her manifest province. But in addition to the few coins she picks up from the better class of visitors, she makes money by the exercise of her occult functions as a mild fortune-teller. On the occasion when the father and daughter, the lover and guest, visited the well, Fitzgerald asked her, in a grave, polite voice, to tell him anything she knew.

"Show me the biggest piece of money you have."

"Well," he said, laughing, "that will be the biggest piece of money you ever saw in your life. That," he said, holding out his hand towards her, "is a hundred-pound note."

The woman looked at it keenly for a moment, then at him.

"Give me a half-crown," she said, "and I'll tell you what I see."

He handed her the coin.

"I see," she said, looking with her bright, dark eyes into his face, "that you are a fool to carry your money about and show it like that. It is well we are all honest people here."

(To be continued.)

LETTERS.—We cannot afford to spare the old-fashioned habit of letter-writing, though cheap postage and post-cards have gone far to destroy detailed and regular correspondence. Just as we show pleasure in a friend's presence, we would show a remembrance of that pleasure, a solicitude for his well-being, in his absence. It is not enough to be fond and faithful. Friendship implies courtesy as well, and demands the visible signs of fondness and faithfulness. As a matter of good-breeding, the writing of letters should be made an essential part of our various codes of behaviour. The few pleasant sentences which make the reader feel that he is missed and valued cost little time and trouble in the writing, and come, perhaps, into a mood which sets an unforeseen value upon them. More kindly feeling, indeed, may be conveyed by letter than by speech; for the most reticent may write what they cannot speak. Probably more delightful friendships have lapsed into indifference, or at least into desuetude, through neglect of punctual letter-writing than through all other causes. And it is a great pity. For the best that is in us answers to a true friendship, and there is no means of grace which can less well be spared. Seen on its sentimental side, therefore, letters to friends become a duty. But friendship pardons many affronts which indifference cannot forgive. And letters of civility should be even more punctiliously sent. No note asking for information of any sort which it is in our power to give—an address, a "character," a direction—ought to be left unanswered over a single post, if it be possible, at whatever cost of trouble, to reply. Of course all invitations or ceremonial notices of whatever kind should be acknowledged at once.



## DREGS AND FROTH.

A STORY OF TO-DAY.

## PART II.

## CHAPTER XV. (continued.)

THERE was something strange, almost to grotesqueness, in the contrast which at that moment presented itself to the mind of Mrs. or rather Lady Weeldon, whose presence appeared to be quite forgotten in the excitement of Owen's arrival.

To see these rude labouring men in this wretched little home, tanned by exposure to changeable weather, their big brown hands deformed and hardened by manual labour, roughly clad in the oldest and cheapest clothes. And then to remember her husband as the son of the one and the brother of the other, to think of his white shapely hands and fashionable attire, his large and stately mansion provided with every luxury that the greatest wealth commands; to know him honoured and distinguished amongst the proudest and highest, and to hear this poor old fisherman and this paltry little cottage farmer so loftily and scornfully repudiating all claim to relationship with this grandly glorified personage, who on his side shrinks with such unfeigned horror from the possibility of being compelled to acknowledge their close kinship.

A curious contrast truly, and one which has perchance a moral, if a novelist dare point it out!

In Lady Weeldon's mind, however, that moral was clear and forcible enough. She saw it in the happiness and content of these hardy ploughers of sea and land; in the unhappiness and discontent of the ambitious parvenu; in the truthfulness, honesty, and dignity of the peasant's manly pride; and in the cowardly falseness, dishonesty, and contemptible meanness of the alderman's. And she said in her heart, "I should be happier and prouder in calling Old Jack father and Owen brother than I am to know myself the wife of an ambitious member of Parliament and one of the wealthiest merchants in England, the Sheriff of the City of London, Alderman Sir John Weeldon."

But she was moved by other sentiments and feelings when Owen arose from his mother's feet and blushed swarthyly to the very roots of his black hair to find the great lady's glance fixed upon him; for if the honest pride of father and son touched her, not less nearly was she touched by the poor old mother's changeless and patient all-enduring and forgiving love.

She crossed the room, placed her hand on the back of her chair, and, bending down over her, said in a soft, low, soothing tone:—

"Don't fret. I feel sure you will not go far nor wait long before you see your son, Sir John Weeldon. If you will let me send a note to Miss Tregarthen by Mr. Owen I think I can bring that about."

Such rarities as pen, ink, and paper had been long unknown in John's cottage, but Owen had a pocket-book from which he tore a leaf, and the lady herself had a pencil, and so the letter was quickly written. It ran as follows:—

"Dearest Guinivere,—

"If my husband should seek me, as I think he will, tell him, after noon to-morrow, not before please, where I am. If he dare come, let him. I have in this a plan and purpose of my own of which you shall know more when I write to you again to-morrow. In haste,

"Your ever loving grateful friend

"Alice Jenkins."

Twisted into a three-cornered note this was received by Owen, who soon after, when his mother's excitement had passed off, wished them all "Good-night," and mounting to the top of the cliff where the patient pony was grazing in the rain, got into his cart and drove away. And not long after, when the rain ceased, old John, who appeared to regard his

wife's sorrowing for so worthless a son with more angry impatience than sympathy, donned his ancient well-worn sou'-wester, and went off to have a soothing pipe and a "dish of tay" with one of his partners.

When the old woman had cleared away the almost untasted meal, Lady Weeldon said to her very gently and quietly:—

"Mother, I have a great secret to tell you," and she placed so much emphasis upon the first word as to awaken considerable curiosity, which became a feeling of open-eyed, open-mouthed wonder when the lady whom she had described to neighbours as "a real lady" with "gould" chains, bracelets, and rings, with scores an' scores of pouns, my dears! "rose and advanced towards her with open and outstretched arms, with deep emotion:—

"I am your son John's wife."

Flushed and trembling, full of incredulity and astonishment, poor old Bess exclaimed:—

"You! you his wife! My Jacky's wife—you—a graund lady!"

"But you forget, mother, your son is a grand gentleman, a Knight and a Member of Parliament."

"Aw! my dear, I know. I heerd ye say't, ony aw ded forget; I know, aw—an—an—"

Here the poor old creature's feelings overcame her, and she began to cry and sob.

Recovering, she said, "Don't mind me a-crying, dear, I dunsna be so walk often; I'll be better sune. So as! so as! aw loar! aw loar! to tho't now that un ha' sen you all the way from Lunnun to un's poor auld mawther so far far, far away, jest to tell hur he wur commin. Twull send I wild wi' joy, my dearie, wild wi' joy!"

Believing that to deceive her would be unnecessary cruelty, Lady Weeldon suffered the old woman to retain the false idea she had expressed.

When the lamp was lighted old John returned in a much better humour than he had gone away in: and when he had cast aside his sou'-wester and waterproof and sat down beside his old wife, she took his great hard hand between her own unyielding brown palms and patting and stroking it affectionately, said with great glee:—

"I hev summat good to tell ye, Jacky."

"Aw!" said the old man, stolidly.

"Shure nuff I hev, my dear. Jacky hev sent un's wife heer. Theer now!"

The old man looked into the old woman's furrowed face, noted the tears in her eyes and the smile of happiness upon her lips, and said quietly:—

"I beant sich fool as to swaller that."

"But 'tis so," replied Bess with triumphant emphasis and a merry laugh, as she looked significantly towards Lady Weeldon, who said:—

"Your son, Mr. Jenkins, is my husband."

For a moment the old man was startled and silent. Then he regarded the alderman's wife sternly with a suspicious glance before he asked severely:—

"Ef yer be Jacky's wife why hev yer come heer with a false name?"

The colour mounted into Lady Weeldon's pale face; she looked confused, cast down her eyes, and was silent.

Finding she did not reply, the old fisherman shook his head as if in sorrowful protest, and said sharply:—

"Maybe 'twud be foiner fun for a graund lady to jest with a pore mawther, an' ye maybe thinks lightly on't, an' maybe we pore fisher folk thinks over much on't; but heark'ee heer, missis, let them as is 'shamed loike o' their own naturall parents, an' their own naturall names, keep theyselves to theyselves—we want no sich things down heer long with we."

And with a gesture of scorn thrown to the "graund lady" he turned to the old fishwife, saying:—

"Hur calls herself Cocherane, and hur calls hur husband Weeldon, and hur says un is my son, and my name's Jenkins, and ye, ye ould fool, I shed be shamed o' yer, yer b'lieve oal they tell 'ee, thee do."

"Jacky, Jacky," exclaimed his wife, striving

to stop his mouth with her hand, "doant spaike to the laady loike that."

But Jacky held her off, saying:

"Doant 'ee mind I, Bess; let un go back to un oan and leave us to ourn."

"Hur has a right heer, and hur sall stay here; hur's my son's wife!" cried Bess passionately.

"My son's name be Owen Jenkins. I've noan other, and hees wife's Polly. I hev noan other daughter. Let this foiner town laady go hur way."

Lady Weeldon has shrank back into the gloom farthest from the little malodorous lamp, and when she speaks her voice betrays her tears.

"I can explain all, but not now. I came to you as a stranger, and as a stranger I intended to remain during this week. But early in the morning I will leave. Can I walk from here to Wauceston?"

"Ees, but yer shallna go, dearie, unless yer wash ut."

"But I do wish it, mother, and I must go."

Old Jenkins, still muttering his discontent and anger, went up the ladder like stairs to bed. The two women remained to talk for a while, and then with kisses they also parted for the night.

Soon after the little cottages under the cliff were sleeping peacefully in the deep shadow of the overhanging cliff, with the solemn moonlight of the calm and quiet night resting cold, misty, and greenish grey on the fields above them, and on the placid sea beyond, and without a light visible in any one of their deep-set little latticed windows.

And in the moonlight that surrounded them Alderman Weeldon was steadily approaching the lowly roof under which his father, mother, and wife were sleeping.

(To be continued.)

## TO THE WORLD GUILTY.

## CHAPTER IV.

AT THE CLUB.

"Hazlemere—have you heard the news?"

The person addressed looked up from a newspaper, and glancing first at his interlocutor, then through the window of the Club morning-room in which he sat, asked with a drawl, "What news?"

"Why, that Count Cameron—Lord Lochisla—is coming to England."

"What!" Herbert Hazlemere, a rich man of great family, who had nothing particular to do but enjoy himself, lifted himself now with an air of keen interest. "Cameron in England—you don't mean it!"

"I do, though," said Major Carston, seating himself. "If you hadn't been half asleep you might have heard it before now. It was in the *Times* this morning, and at the Rag (I've just come from there) all the fellows are swearing they'll give him a royal welcome—but I doubt his showing up much, he's so infernally proud."

"Aye," said Hazlemere, thoughtfully.

"Now, what can bring him to England? He has never returned openly since that affair about ten years ago. Is he in London? Is it possible he is going to try and make it up?"

"Not very likely, my boy. If there is a woman in the case, it is not Gwendolen Stanhope."

"She must have cared for him, I should think," remarked Hazlemere, "for she might have married, though she has not much money. She's very lovely. I never could make out that affair. It surely couldn't have been the money. Lochisla was a rich man, and it's ridiculous to suppose that he would brand his honour and make himself an exile for the sake of a girl's fortune, when he had plenty, too; besides, it was such a scandalous proceeding, so utterly indefensible."

"And Lochisla made no explanation. I don't think I ever was more taken aback in my life," said Major Carston, "than when I heard of

that affair. I actually wouldn't believe it at first. You, of course, never knew Lochisla—you were only going up to Oxford then. He had just entered the army; he was the most popular sub in the service. He had the most punctilious notions of honour, and as for women—he was chivalrous to an apple-woman. I shall never forget that moment at the Reg when we heard that on his marriage day Lochisla had failed to put in an appearance, and the very next day he had thrown up his commission and left the country, and then he entered the German army. His services there show us what we have lost."

"I can't make up my mind about him," said Hazlemere, musingly; "whether to consider him a confounded scamp, or to believe that there is some mystery which may one day come to light and exonerate him from all blame."

"He assumed all blame," said Major Carston, "and the question is whether he really deserved it, or whether he was only trying to screen Miss Stanhope."

"You don't mean—" began Hazlemere. Major Carston interrupted him.

"Not for a minute, my dear fellow. Nothing could have been more complete than Lochisla's vindication on that point. No one but a gadfly could have thought such a thing of Miss Stanhope after what Lochisla's counsel said at the trial. Still it is possible there might have been a good reason for such conduct, though it is not easy to imagine such a reason. One is forced to presume something very damaging to himself."

"A low marriage which he would not own, eh?"

"Possibly. He must have thought the woman dead in that case, and might have learned of her existence on his marriage day."

"Not," said Hazlemere, "that that would justify him in putting such an indignity on Miss Stanhope."

"Men do queer things," remarked Major Carston, as though he belonged to some "third sex." "Well, some day the mystery may be solved; at present it remains impenetrable."

"I wonder," remarked Hazlemere, after a pause, "what became of that child Lochisla had with him in the camp? I forget the name."

"Hyacinth Vernon," said the Major. "Ah! she would be getting on for seventeen now. They said she was a beauty; and that reminds me, it would be odd if it turned out so. Someone told me the other day—I think it was the fellow who used to be Vienna Correspondent of the *Pall Mall*—that Count Cameron's 'Hyacinth' was connected with the Stanhopes through her mother. I heard some years ago—I forget how—that a sister of old Stanhope had married a man who was poor, though of good family. Maybe it was Vernon, this girl's father."

"Well, things usually delegated to novels often happen in real life," said Hazlemere, as his friend rose. "I hope I shall get the chance to know Count Cameron. Whatever he did in the past he cut a splendid figure in the Franco-German war, and I am mightily anxious to know him."

"So anybody would be," replied the Major. "Ta-ta," and he quitted the club.

Perhaps if Herbert Hazlemere could have seen a little way into the future, he would not have been so anxious to become acquainted with the famous Uhlan. But how many things should we desire if we could know what the desire would bring?

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FIRST NIGHT AT STANHOPE LEA.

How vividly that first evening at Stanhope Lea was impressed on Hyacinth Vernon's memory! Gwendolen herself conducted her cousin to her room—a pretty chamber commanding a view of the river, and in the distance Falcon's Rest. Hyacinth declined the services of a maid; she was not used to one, she said, frankly; and as for her hair it arranged itself. Gwendolen, though possibly

not entirely magnanimously disposed towards her beautiful cousin, unbent far more than usual to her, and told her about the village and the people, and especially about old Madge Adams, who had nursed Lady Stanhope before her death, and was reputed by some to be a "wise woman."

"And you will take me to see her?" said Hyacinth.

"Yes, surely."

"And does she cure cattle of the murrain, and wear a scarlet cloak?" pursued Hyacinth. "No real English peasants wear scarlet cloaks, Hyacinth, only in pictures. You do not believe in witches and the evil eye?"

"Oh, no; but I believe some things for which perhaps you would call me superstitious."

"We have no banshee or ghost of any kind here," said Gwendolen, "but we know some people who have; if ever we should be stopping with them you might see the ghost. Are you ready? Shall we go down?"

Dinner was ready, and Hyacinth noticed that Miss Philippa, evidently by general consent, took the head of the table. Hyacinth sat next to Louis and opposite to Gwendolen, and from time to time the observant blue eyes scanned under their long lashes the fair countenance of Count Cameron's sometime betrothed. What was there in that face that gave a sense of pain and perplexity? Not the evidence of suffering alone; it was something more than this, something utterly indefinable, but that no reasoning could dissipate, partly from the very fact of its intangibility.

Hyacinth tried to analyse it, but in vain; yet this impression lent additional interest to the countenance, though Hyacinth could not yet decide whether she altogether liked it or not. No unworthy feeling influenced her in that doubt. Her pure and lofty nature was incapable of an even unconscious animus against her cousin because Cameron was perhaps still in heart her lover.

Louis's face presented no such perplexities. Its faults and its virtues were on the surface; it lacked power, but Hyacinth knew at once that she and her cousin would be good friends—though it never occurred to her that such friendship might have any dangers for him. There was nothing sinister in those clear frank eyes, and the unmistakable signs of insidious disease were so many more claims on Hyacinth's regard. The girl, who had never known a touch of illuence herself, was too true a woman not to have her sympathies aroused by disease or weakness, even if she had not witnessed its ravages, and seen strong men weaker than infants in its grasp.

Conversation during dinner was general, and the German war was not touched upon; but when the adjournment to the drawing-room took place, and Miss Philippa was comfortably ensconced in a *fauteuil*, where she dozed the best part of the evening, Gwendolen seated herself beside Hyacinth on a lounge, while Louis was looking for an album he wanted to show his cousin, and said, quite abruptly:

"Did you notice a high grey tower among the trees on your right as you drove from the station?"

Hyacinth started and changed colour.

"Yes," she answered. "Why?"

"You know whom it belongs to?" said Gwendolen.

"Yes," returned Hyacinth again. "I asked Louis, and he told me."

"He did not tell you himself then—Count Cameron?"

"No; why should he?"

"Why should he not?" Gwendolen laughed—a short bitter laugh—"and give his own colour to the story of the past."

Hyacinth flushed a little, but said quietly, "You talk to me in riddles, cousin Gwendolen. I have not seen Count Cameron since I was a child. Why should he talk to me of his past life?"

"You have not seen him since you were a child," repeated Gwendolen, in a kind of wonderment. Then she added, after a pause,

"But you surely heard something—some rumour—concerning his past life? You surely heard from him something connecting his name with ours."

"Yes; he asked me one night about my mother's relations and I told him their name. He seemed to know it, and told me afterwards that they justly accused him of wronging them."

"Was that all?"

"That was all."

"But in Vienna—Berlin—you must have heard more?"

"Rumours—on *dits*—nothing certain," the girl spoke reluctantly.

"And they—what were they?" Gwendolen spoke eagerly.

Hyacinth turned aside, and said in a low voice, "That he had been betrothed to an English lady and had deserted her. Then I thought the lady must be you. Forgive me?"

"Hyacinth, you have nothing to ask pardon for. I asked you the questions. You know nothing really then of the Cameron who has earned such laurels in the war?"

"Nothing," said Hyacinth steadily, though without looking up, "but that he was even to me most gentle and tender; and that in the army, from prince to trooper, he was loved and honoured, though there might have been jealousy, because to a man of foreign birth such high place was given. Yet there seemed to be none—or none that could make itself heard."

"Aye," said Gwendolen, bitterly; "he has all the needful glamour! Here—at home, in the English army, he was always a favourite. No wonder. But why did he make himself an alien—enter a foreign service—lose almost his identity in a foreign title—if not for a dishonour that blasted his name here?"

"A man may suffer wrongfully," said Hyacinth, with a quick flash from her violet eyes, a quick quiver of the lips. "I am still in the dark. What wrong has Count Cameron done to you?"

Gwendolen laid her hand—it was burning hot—on Hyacinth's, and bent towards her. "The deadliest wrong, save one," she said, in a low intense tone, "that a man can do a woman. Hush!" as the girl lifted her startled eyes to the fair face beside her—"here is Louis. I will speak to you again of this."

She rose as she spoke, and moved away; fearful, perhaps, of meeting her brother's gaze. Hyacinth felt stunned and bewildered. Gwendolen's words rang in terrible harmony with Cameron's own, and with his actions, and yet she clung to her faith in him. Impossible that he could, for any unworthy motive, have abandoned the woman he had vowed to protect and shelter with his love and his name. She shrank from the thought that there could be any grievous wrong in Gwendolen, which would justify the abrupt and unexplained breaking of a tie binding on honour, if not on affections as well. But Louis claimed her attention now, and the girl turned round to him smiling. And as they sat side by side looking over the pictures Gwendolen watched them, and her hands were tightly clenched.

"It will be strange indeed if he does not learn to love her—and if she should give him her heart, what then? She loved Lochisla as a child! But I will turn her loving into loathing. And he—he—oh, even now I could forgive him. Ah, it would be triumph indeed to see him at my feet!"

Was this how Gwendolen Stanhope loved Errol Cameron?

When the cousins separated for the night, Gwendolen accompanied Hyacinth to her room. "Hyacinth," she said, closing the door and standing by it, "there is something I wish you to read—touching what I spoke of to you this evening. It is in an English newspaper. When I heard you were coming to live with us, I knew you must be told all. It was best you should hear it from us. But I will bring you the newspaper as well, that you may see there is no error or slander."

"Gwendolen!"

"Hush!" said Miss Stanhope quickly.



"You do not know me, and you know—or think you know—Lochisla. He was kind to you; you have no right, even if you have the wish, to condemn him unheard. I want you to have every tittle of evidence before you. I could not ask you to believe my word. You would be wrong to do so. I will give you the paper to-morrow."

Hyacinth sprang forward.  
"Not to-morrow—to-night. Give it to me now—I am not weary; if I were I could not sleep now. You have told me so much that I must know more."

"I am sorry, then, I told you," said Gwendolen, startled at the other's impetuosity. "Wait till to-morrow."

"I cannot bear suspense," interrupted Hyacinth, trembling with suppressed passion. "Give me the paper now, Gwendolen."

"As you will, dear," Gwendolen resisted no longer.

She quitted the room, and in a few moments returned with a newspaper, which she placed in Hyacinth's hands, and, silently kissing her, went out once more.

## CHAPTER VI.

### STANHOPE V. THE EARL OF LOCHISLA.

LEFT alone, Hyacinth locked the door, and with wildly beating heart drew near to the light. Her fingers trembled as they opened the paper Gwendolen had given to her, but she did not falter or hesitate. Had Gwendolen, then, dragged her wrongs before the public? But stay; she might have no choice—her good name might have been at stake. The paper was a copy of the *Times* for June 8, 18—, and the matter Hyacinth was to read was a report of what was headed in very large type: "Extraordinary Breach of Promise Case," and the action was brought by Miss Gwendolen Alice Stanhope against Errol Ivor Cameron, Earl of Lochisla. The defendant was not present, but was represented by counsel.

The counsel for the prosecution, in opening the case, said the circumstances under which the action was brought were peculiar—he believed unprecedented—and his client had no choice but to make them public, in order to clear her name from any imputation. No damages were claimed, and he was expressly instructed not even to claim costs. The persons involved moved in the highest circles of society. The defendant, who held a commission in the —th Highlanders, was of noble lineage and high rank, and possessed of extensive estates in the highlands of Scotland and elsewhere. About six months before the present action, he being then only twenty-one, and having just entered the army, purchased Falcon's Rest, in Berkshire. It was while staying for a short time at Falcon's Rest that Lord Lochisla met Miss Stanhope, the only daughter of Sir Francis Stanhope of Stanhope Lea, a mansion situated about a mile and a half from Falcon's Rest. Sir Francis Stanhope was a man of ancient county family, and was, at the time, supposed to be wealthy, and his daughter would have a considerable jointure. Miss Stanhope was just seventeen. In the course of a few months Lord Lochisla became engaged to Miss Stanhope, and the marriage was rather hurried forward, on account of Mr. Stanhope's failing health. Only a few days before the marriage the Earl had seen Miss Stanhope at Stanhope Lea, and his manner was unchanged. He was then living in London, but the marriage was to take place at Stanhope Lea, and Lord Lochisla was to come down in the morning and meet his bride at the church. The wedding party went to the church at the appointed time, but the Earl had not arrived. After they had waited for him a little time, thinking he might have been delayed by some untoward circumstance, a telegram was handed to the rector of Thorndean from the Earl, briefly stating that it was impossible for him to fulfil the contract to which every rule of honour bound him, and that in two days he should leave England. The shock of this intelligence

nearily proved fatal to Sir Francis Stanhope; but he was able to give orders that Lord Lochisla should be immediately telegraphed for. The defendant obeyed the summons, and that night stood by the dying man's bedside. What passed between them—for the interview was unwitnessed—was not known. After the lapse of about half an hour the Earl quitted the dying man's presence, and left the house without seeing any other member of the household. Sir Francis Stanhope, on being interrogated, refused to speak. He shortly afterwards fell into a syncope, and died in the early morning.

No explanation was then or afterwards vouchsafed by Lord Lochisla of his conduct. He wrote the following day to Sir Francis Stanhope's sister a letter, in which he said that he had no excuse to make, no palliation to offer. His love for Miss Stanhope was unchanged. He had no word to breathe against her; whatever reparation it was in his power to make he would make. Anywhere and everywhere he would take the full blame of his conduct—the shame, the dishonour—these were his very words—were his, and his alone.

Lord Lochisla immediately sold out of the army, and anticipated the action of the clubs to which he belonged by withdrawing his name and left for the continent. Under the circumstances, Miss Stanhope's friends saw no alternative but to bring the present action. Scandal would be certain to cast upon the lady's name the most cruel aspersions, and that consideration overcame of necessity the inevitable repugnance of a refined woman to vulgar publicity. A possible solution to the defendant's conduct might be found in the fact that, while Sir Francis Stanhope was believed wealthy, his affairs were really in a very embarrassed state. This discovery was not made till his death, when it became apparent that Miss Stanhope, instead of having a large jointure, would possess very little. It was possible that a knowledge of this fact came to the Earl of Lochisla on the very day of the marriage; but it seemed hardly likely that a man, whose wealth placed him entirely above mercenary considerations, would cover himself with dishonour, for the sake of that which could have been of no consequence to him. Counsel concluded by saying that as he understood there was practically no defence, he should delay calling witnesses until the defendant's counsel had spoken.

Lord Lochisla's counsel then spoke. He was instructed, he said, by his client, who was abroad, to offer no defence to this action. The facts were exactly as stated, and Lord Lochisla desired, in the most emphatic manner, to repudiate any imputation on Miss Stanhope. He had no power to explain his conduct; any solution put upon it detrimental to himself he passed by; he pleaded no justification; and he must abide by any verdict that might be pronounced on him. Counsel was further more instructed to pay the entire costs of the action, and, for the rest, Lord Lochisla placed himself unreservedly in the hands of the Court.

Then came the verdict, and in scathing language the Judge reviewed the conduct of the Earl of Lochisla. In the course of a long experience, no more shameful and scandalous case, he said, had come before him. He knew not how to characterize the conduct of the man who professed to love and honour a woman, who won her affections, and then abandoned her at the very altar, exposing her to the bitterest humiliation, as well as to the suffering which even a less public, less flagrant desertion would have caused. And that nothing might be wanting to rob the Earl's action in this case of the last shred of manliness, he gave no explanation either to the woman he had deserted, or, so far as could be gathered, to anyone else. The defendant's counsel had made no allusion to the interview between his client and Sir Francis Stanhope, and it was useless conjecturing whether any explanation was offered to the dying man. Certainly it would seem that this man, although

the representative of one of the most ancient and honourable houses in Scotland, and belonging to an honourable profession, had not much honour to lose.

With paling cheeks and burning eyes, and teeth set in agony, and breath rising and falling in heavy throbs, her hands pressed tightly on her temples, Hyacinth read every word of that record of wrong and shame, not pausing or faltering even at the scathing condemnation of the judge—well merited, as he knew the case—as the whole world knew it. Was this the awful truth? this the wrong of which Cameron had spoken. The girl sat stunned and dazed: dastard—disgraceful! Could such words have been spoken of Errol Cameron? Had she read aright? Aye, those words danced before her in letters of fire; and had not his own defence more than justified them? Defence! he had made none. He had owned himself all that he had been named—faithless lover—dishonoured gentleman. Was the man who stood before Hyacinth now—the mask stripped off, his very beauty hideous—the knightly soldier, the gentle and tender protector in whose loyal presence no helpless women need ever tremble; who, even among the deadly enemies who feared and hated him as a leader that never knew defeat, was honoured as another Bayard?

The test had come—the hour of full knowledge—and how did Hyacinth meet it?

Sharp and deep the sword pierced indeed; but not, oh, not because faith wavered. Doubt Errol Cameron! the girl almost fainted, even in her agony, at the thought! The evidence arrayed against him might well have staggered even such faith as hers, for he had not denied the wrong; yet her faith was unshaken—not for a moment had Hyacinth believed Errol Cameron dishonoured in truth; he was the martyr, not the assassin of honour.

He had laid down a thousand times more than his life—his spotless name at Gwendolen's feet; for her sake he had endured shame and contumely. Was the sin, then, in her? Ah, no; but because no motive that the range of reason could supply was apparent was there no room for faith?

## CHAPTER VII.

HYACINTH was the first in the breakfast-room the next morning, and sought for a book that she might at least seem occupied. She did not feel weary, though she had only slept for about an hour towards the dawn.

She had discovered a volume of German poetry, and was listlessly turning the pages when Louis came in. The girl looked up with a bright sweet smile, and rose to greet her cousin.

"May I?" said he, taking her outstretched hand, and bending to ward her—he had hardly stooped, for his tall cousin was nearly of his own inches. Hyacinth smiled again:

"Why, yes," said she, simply. "You are my cousin," and Louis lightly kissed the soft pale cheek.

"I hope you slept well," he added, "on your first night in England."

"Pretty well, thanks, I seemed to have so much to think about; so it was my own fault that I was wakeful," returned Hyacinth.

"You are a good soldier, then," said Louis; "for you don't look as if you had had a wakeful night. I should be very tired the next morning if I lay awake all night, or even for many hours."

Hyacinth looked at him. "You are not strong, are you?" she said, gently.

"Not very," the young man half sighed, "and you don't look so. Hyacinth, at least, you look fragile."

"Oh, but I am strong; I am never ill," said the girl. "We feather-weight people have the best of it, after all, you know. There is not enough of us for sickness or fatigue to lay hold of."

She turned as she spoke, hearing a touch on the door, and her pulse quickened as Gwendolen came in, but her clear bright glance met her cousin's without faltering, and her greeting was no more to Gwendolen than her looks.



[A SHADOW ON HER PATH.]

Miss Stanhope's keen gaze was baffled. She could make nothing of Hyacinth.

Then Miss Philippa entered, and breakfast was rung for, and during breakfast Louis proposed an excursion into the village as it was a fine morning, and a row later if Hyacinth liked; and Hyacinth assented to all, adding—"and Gwendolen promised to take me to see an old woman who is said to be 'wise.'"

"Oh," said Louis, laughing. "Madge Adams; yes, she is a quaint old body. You would delight in her. She lives in an odd old-fashioned cottage all by itself, about half a mile from the village; you have to go through a wood to get at it. She lives all alone, and no one knows exactly what she lives on—some pension, most likely; but she likes to be mysterious."

"Has she been here long?" asked Hyacinth.

"No; about ten years." Louis's brow clouded for a moment. "You know she was our mother's nurse before she died—that was ever so many years ago, when I was only a few months' old. After my mother's death, Madge left of course; and we saw no more of her, till she came and settled here. I wonder at her liking the place, for she is from the north country."

"You could divine that in her speech even now," said Gwendolen, speaking for the first time since they sat down. Miss Philippa added, "You will like to see the church too, Hyacinth; it is very old, and all the Stanhopes for eight generations are buried there. There used to be a monastery attached to the church. Some of the ruins still remain."

"I shall like so much to see it all, Aunt Philippa. And you have no other church?"

"There is a Catholic church three miles off," interposed Louis; "none nearer; but it is a pleasant walk or ride; or you can go by river."

"Temptations to piety," said Hyacinth, smiling. "Perhaps I shall ask you on Sunday to show me the road."

"I will go with you, if you will allow me," said Stanhope.

"You are too kind; but I should not wish you to do that. I mean not to go into the church," said Hyacinth.

"I do not mind." Louis laughed, and opened his eyes. "Why should I? 'Tis a nice church. They have capital singing."

"You have been then?"

"Once—years ago—when I was a lad."

Miss Philippa rose abruptly from the table.

"I wonder," she said, in a low voice, to her nephew, "that you can set foot in that church where you went with Cameron—which his money helped to build. I daresay he looks back complacently to that deed now, and thinks it atoned beforehand for his villainy."

Louis flushed crimson. "Aunt, aunt!" he said, entreatingly, in a quick undertone, and glanced hastily at Hyacinth. The girl's colour had risen a little, and her lips quivered as she rose also, but that was all. She said nothing, but turned away, and Miss Philippa left the room.

There was a moment's awkward pause, which Hyacinth first broke.

"Louis," said she, laying her white hand on his shoulder, "I do not quite catch all Aunt Philippa said; but if she does not wish you to come with me, and you also would rather not, I should be unhappy for you to come."

Stanhope looked up into the beautiful face.

"Hyacinth, you must forgive Aunt Philippa. I think you will when you know all the cause she has for feeling so bitterly about—about Lord Lochisla." He paused, glancing at Gwendolen; but Gwendolen had turned away, and was standing by the window with her back to the room.

"Yes," said Hyacinth, following her cousin's gaze, but only glancing fleetingly at him as she withdrew her eyes; then looking straight before her; "yes, but you share her feelings, surely."

"Aye, verily," said Louis, through his teeth, and clenching his hand. Hyacinth saw the action, though his hand hung down by his side.

"But still," he went on, "I do not carry bitterness to the same lengths. Dead walls have

done no wrong. I went with Lochisla to this church of which we are speaking when I was a lad. I was very fond of him then; who was not? He had helped to build the church; he was brought up a Catholic—his house had never changed. I don't suppose he was religious, but he was always free with money, and he was asked to help towards the building of the church, so he did; in fact, pretty well gave all that was needed. Aunt Philippa wonders that I can go to the church; but why not?"

"Why not?" Hyacinth repeated, dropping her hand from her cousin's shoulder.

The church would be so much the dearer to her for knowing that Errol Cameron had built it. But at the word Gwendolen started, and turned round.

"Hyacinth," she said, wonderingly, "you know—you read—"

"Read—read what?" said Louis, hurriedly looking from one to the other. "Gwendolen, did you give her the paper to read last night?"

"At her own wish, Louis; she would take no denial."

"How should I?" said Hyacinth, lifting her head, and looking both hands tightly before her. "When she spoke of Count Cameron as one unworthy of respect—when I knew that he had, by his own admission, wronged you, and yet knew not how? Some people can bear suspense, I cannot. Remember how much I owed him, Louis—remember that all I knew of him was to his honour; how could I hear him spoken against, and know that the truth was within my reach, yet put it off to a more convenient season?"

"Dear Hyacinth, forgive me. Perhaps it was best on both sides; best, that you should not misjudge Gwendolen, but that you should know." He turned aside now, and his voice trembled. "How black a villain at heart is the man you believed so noble."

(To be continued.)





[HOW THEY MET.]

NOVELETTE.]

## WINNIE BROOKE.

## CHAPTER I.

THE calm hush of a Sabbath evening—no thing to break the stillness save the lowing of cattle in a distant field, at intervals the plaintive note of a tired bird, and from afar the monotonous sound of the church bell calling to evening service.

In an upstairs room of a cottage made picturesque by porch and gables, over which climbed a profuse luxuriance of roses, whose crimson blossoms were swaying gently to and fro in the soft west wind, a bed had been drawn up close to the window, so that its occupant might be the better able to see the velvet lawn and gardens on which it looked, and inhale the fresh sweetness of the mignonette blooming in the sunny borders below. The bed was a white-curtained one, exquisitely clean and neat, but the draperies had been pushed back as far as they would go, as if the delicate-faced woman lying there would fain see as much as possible of the fair world, to which, it was all too evident, she must soon bid adieu for ever. The wan pinched look of the features, the grey shadow lying over them, and the deep hollows round the eyes—all proclaimed the fact that the dark angel's wings were even now ready to fold round her. Nevertheless, it seemed not only that her mind was perfectly clear but that all her faculties were keenly on the alert, for she lay in a listening attitude, her head turned in such a way on the pillow as to hear soonest any sound that might come from the road to which the garden sloped. Presently she half raised herself on her elbow.

"I hear carriage-wheels, Hannah," she said, in a quick whisper, to a middle-aged quakerish-looking woman who was sitting watching her. "It must be Winifred!"

The attendant shook her head doubtfully;

her less acute senses had failed to catch the distant rumbling, which, however, presently made itself perfectly audible, and a few minutes later a cab drove up to the gates, but almost before it had time to stop the door was flung open and a girl sprang out and ran up the garden walk, her light footsteps hardly touching the gravel in their impatient swiftness. She modified her haste when she entered the house, pausing for a moment on the threshold before ascending the stairs, at the top of which she was met by the servant before referred to, whose hands she eagerly seized.

"Is auntie better?" she asked breathlessly.

"She is expecting you, Miss Winnie," was the evasive reply, as Hannah drew her gently towards the room. "Don't let her see you are agitated," she added in a whisper.

If there was something pitiful in the smile the girl called to her quivering lips, there was also the indication of a brave strong spirit in the determination with which she conquered her own emotion as she entered the sick chamber and knelt beside the bed, while she took the pallid hand lying on the coverlet and pressed her fresh young lips to it in a tender kiss that served in lieu of verbal greeting, and allowed her time to recover the shock the sick woman's death-like appearance had given her.

"I am very, very glad you are come, Winnie," said the invalid, gazing at her with eyes from which, for the moment, affection seemed to have chased the gathering film; "I wanted to see you once more, my child."

"Why did you not send for me before?" cried the girl miserably, letting her head droop on her folded arms.

"Because I did not think the end quite so near, and I wished you to remain at Bruxelles as long as possible, so that you might not lose one advantage of education; still it was necessary I should see you, for I have something to say to you which it is important you should

hear from my own lips." She paused a moment and looked at Hannah, who apparently understood the wish expressed by her eyes, and poured her out some stimulating draught, after which she quietly left the room. "It is concerning yourself I would speak, Winnie," added the sick woman, clasping her fingers tightly round the little hand she held, and whose warmth her own had already chilled. "You have often asked me about your parents, and I have generally contrived to give evasive answers, that must sometimes have perplexed you; but in point of fact, my dear, they were the only ones I *could* give, for I knew little more of the subject than you yourself. You are already aware no blood relationship exists between us, but you think I adopted you when your parents died because your mother was my friend. This is not the case. I have only seen her once in my life."

She paused again to take breath, while Winifred watched her changing face with deep interest and anxiety.

"I will tell you how you came to me," she went on. "After my husband's death I felt very lonely, and lamented more than ever that I had never had a baby, and then the idea occurred to me of adopting one. So I advertised in the papers my willingness to bring up a child on payment of a small sum of money, and two days afterwards a lady came to me, bringing with her a little girl of about fourteen months old—yourself. She told me she was a widow, and had been offered an appointment as companion to a lady going to India; but as she could not take her child with her she wished to place her with some responsible person, who would bring her up as her own, and to whom she was willing to pay two hundred pounds, on condition that she should not be troubled in any way concerning her daughter's future. I was quite ready to agree to these terms, for I wished to adopt a child absolutely; and the promise that she should not be taken from me when she was grown up made me the more anxious to close with the lady, so I signed

a receipt for the money, and then she went away, leaving you in my charge."

"But surely you have heard from her since?" cried Winifred, her voice trembling with eagerness.

"Not a word.—I know no more of her than of the veriest stranger in the universe. Certainly, I did suggest that she should leave me some address, so that I might communicate with her in case anything happened to you, and she said she would comply with my request as soon as she was settled, but I have never heard from her to this day."

She sank back on her pillows, exhausted, while Winifred remained in a state of bewilderment that grew deeper every instant—in point of fact, the girl's brain failed to comprehend all at once this strange story, that seemed to belong to the pages of a romance rather than this commonplace work-a-day world of ours. True, she had fancied there was something in the history of her parents that had been kept from her; for her aunt (as she called Mrs. Ellis) had invariably manifested a singular distaste to speaking of them, and met the young girl's inquiries with evasive reticence that had not failed to strike her as strange, but that the mystery should have such a key as this had been beyond her wildest imagination to conceive.

"Then I have no right to the name I bear even, I suppose?" she said presently, with a bitterness to which her voice was little accustomed.

"I neglected to inquire how you had been christened. Your mother had already asked me to call you by my own name, but that I decided not to do," replied Mrs. Ellis. "I therefore gave you the title of an old school-fellow who died many years ago; and when I left my home in the Midland Counties and came here I brought you with me as my niece, which everyone believes you to be. Now, Winnie, let me speak to you of your future. There is no chance of your mother claiming you, for she is either dead or desirous of ignoring your existence altogether—in any case, you have only yourself to depend upon, and the best thing you can do will be to obtain a situation as governess. My annuity, as you know, dies with me, and the two hundred pounds left by your mother have already been expended on your education, so that all I have to bequeath to you will be the proceeds of my furniture, which I have directed shall be sold immediately after my decease."

The expression of brooding misery that had come over Winifred's bright young face disappeared under the influence of the thoughtful affection evinced by Mrs. Ellis's words—the affection that even in this supreme moment held undisputed sway, and looked on her welfare as its first consideration. She raised the hand of her benefactress to her lips and covered it with kisses, while the heavy tear-drops, that all her efforts were powerless to restrain, fell thickly over it.

"Dearest auntie, if my mother deserted me, God was good, and did not let me miss her care; you have filled her place, and been to me the truest friend, wisest counsellor, tenderest guardian, girl ever had!" she exclaimed with a sudden burst of passionate emotion. For answer Mrs. Ellis laid her other hand on her protégée's head, and they both remained silent, each occupied with thoughts that would have been almost profaned if put into words.

And so the time wore on, twilight's soft dusk curtain enshrouded the quiet world, and by-and-bye great yellow stars came out of the purple dome above and shed their faint lustre on the face of the woman whose spirit had even now fathomed mysteries deep as those held by the starry spheres.

Happily for herself Winifred Brooke had no time for indulging the grief she felt at the loss of her protectress, or the terrible sense of solitude that now and again came over her when she thought of her friendless position, utterly alone as she was in the world, and wholly dependent on herself both at present and in the dim future that she could not think of without

a shudder of apprehensive fear. She lost no time in seeking a situation, and as soon as Mrs. Ellis's affairs were settled answered an advertisement in the *Times*, through whose agency she was engaged by a Lady Heathcote as governess to her husband's ward—a little girl of ten years old—who had lately come to reside at Heathcote Towers.

During the time that intervened between this and her departure she had leisure to think over the strange disclosure made to her so recently, and the more she pondered the more hopeless appeared the chance of ever unravelling the mystery surrounding her parentage—in truth, the girl at last did her best to dismiss the subject from her mind, for a sick feeling of disgust came over her whenever she reflected on the heartless conduct of her mother. Surely she could not be expected to feel any degree of affection for such a parent, and as certainly there could be no pleasure to either in a meeting, even if such a thing could have been brought about, of which there did not seem at present the slightest possibility. No. Winifred decided, with a sharp pang at her heart, there could be for her none of those sacred memories that usually cling about the name of mother, none of the caresses and affection which she saw lavished so freely on other girls, around whom were woven all those tender home ties which never seem so precious as when they are lost!

She was glad when the time came for her to leave the little northern village where her childhood had been spent, glad to say good-bye to the memories it held, all save that one—that was too deeply enshrined in her heart for change or absence to affect it—and glad to begin the new life opening before her. Heathcote Towers, whither she was going, was in W-shire—a long day's journey from her old home—from which she started early in the morning, after bidding farewell to Mrs. Ellis's old servant, Hannah Richards, who had come to the station to see her off. She got to London about two o'clock, and drove at once to Paddington, whence her train started; but on arriving there she found herself nearly an hour too soon, and therefore employed the interval by walking a little way outside the station, and looking at the shop windows, which, to her, were both novel and amusing, for with the exception of her sojourn at Bruxelles she had hardly ever left her home in the North.

As she was standing gazing at the jewels sparkling in a goldsmith's window, a fashionably attired woman whom she had had before noticed at her side happened to tread on her dress, and in so doing tore the crape with which it was trimmed. She was profuse in her apologies, and begged to be allowed to repair her awkwardness by pinning up the torn flounce, which, in spite of Winifred's remonstrances, she persisted in doing, and then walked away in a manner that struck the young girl as being rather hurried.

But she had no leisure to reflect on the incident, for her time was nearly up, and she hastened back to procure her ticket; before getting it, however, she put her hand in her pocket to draw out her purse, but—she could not find it! She searched again with nervously trembling fingers, turned her pockets inside out, shook the linings of her dress—all to no avail; the purse was gone, and Winifred was left to digest the unpleasant consciousness of being alone in London without a halfpenny of money, for she had only brought away enough to defray the expenses of her journey, and the rest was to be forwarded on as soon as Mrs. Ellis's affairs were finally settled. Contact with the world had not yet taught her its lesson of concealing her feelings; and as a true sense of her dilemma was forced upon her, she looked up with an expression of such piteous bewilderment that a gentleman, standing near, who had been watching her movements, answered the unconscious appeal, and came to her side, raising his hat as he approached.

"I beg your pardon, you seem as if you had lost something; can I be of any assistance to

you?" he asked kindly, with a purity of accent that was singularly pleasant, and at the same time sufficient guarantee of his gentle breeding.

Thoroughly unconventional, Winifred saw nothing alarming in being thus accosted by a stranger; indeed, her first sentiment was one of relief at hearing a sympathising voice, which at least seemed to promise help.

"I have lost my purse; I think a woman who spoke to me awhile ago must have stolen it," she answered simply, raising her eyes with an expression of such tragic sorrow in their depths that a faint smile dawned on her interlocutor's lips. "Do you think there is any chance of finding it?"

"I am afraid not," he said, shaking his head. "Looking for the thief would be like searching for a needle in the proverbial haystack, but"—hesitating ever so little—"if you would permit me to have the pleasure of temporarily helping you—"

"Thank you—you are very kind," she murmured gratefully as he paused. "I want to get to Heathcote, in W-shire, and I have not a ticket."

"Heathcote!" he repeated in some slight surprise. "That is a strange coincidence, for I am going there myself, and must make haste if I wish to catch the train, for it leaves in five minutes," he added, glancing at his watch. "If you will remain here for a few seconds, I will get your ticket and bring it to you," saying which he left her side, but returned almost immediately. "Be quick," he said, "we have not a minute to lose."

Which was indeed the case, the train being actually on the point of starting, and it was only by dint of catching hold of Winifred's arm, and hurrying her along, that he succeeded in getting her and himself safely in a first-class carriage before the door was shut. His first action, after seeing her comfortably settled in a corner, was to provide her with a magazine, after which he retired to the farther end, and, as if to show he had no intention of presuming on the service he had rendered her, took up a newspaper and began to read, thus giving her a chance of seeing what sort of knight this was who had so gallantly come to her assistance.

In good truth he might have been the model for Sir Lancelot, for all his nineteenth-century attire and surroundings—he might have been King Olaf himself, thought Winifred, as her eyes dwelt on the sunny Saxon beauty of his face, the bright pi-ering eyes, the finely cut lips—beautiful enough to have smiled any woman's heart away—and the tawny, close-cropped hair, cut in military fashion very short. Winifred looked at him with the pleasure we all feel in beholding anything that gratifies our artistic instincts, only in this case her admiration was bestowed neither on a picture nor a statue, and its object happened to raise his eyes during her quiet study of his face, and encountered hers, which were instantly withdrawn, while a wave of crimson slowly crept over her cheek and throat.

"Can't you find anything interesting in your magazine?" he said, feeling it incumbent upon him to speak. "Will you let me offer you *Punch* instead?"

"Oh! no, thank you. I have no doubt *Temple Bar* is interesting enough, only when I am travelling I don't care for reading. I like looking about me better," she replied, rather hastily, but without the embarrassment he had expected to detect in her voice. "Besides, I have never been this way before, so it is all fresh to me."

"Then you don't know Heathcote?"

"No, I have not even seen it," she said, and he thereupon decided she must be on her way to pay a visit. "What kind of a place is it?"

"If you mean the village itself—insignificant enough, but the country around is exceedingly picturesque, and there are some fine old houses in the neighbourhood, notably Heathcote Towers."

"That is where I am going," she interposed.



"Indeed!" he exclaimed, with animation. "Then we shall doubtless see each other pretty frequently, for I live within two miles of the Towers, and my people have always been intimate with the Heathcotes."

Winifred shook her head; and a certain little haughty curl of the lip as she answered gave her companion more than a passing glimpse of her character.

"I do not suppose there is the least probability of our meeting often," she said, looking out of the window as she spoke, with a sort of fear lest his manner might change when he learnt the position she would occupy. "I am to be the governess."

If he felt any surprise at the announcement, neither voice nor manner betrayed it, only a sort of puzzled look came on his face.

"Governess!" he repeated. "But to whom? Miss Heathcote must be as old, nay, older, than yourself."

"Oh! I am not going to teach Miss Heathcote," she responded, with a laugh that brought out two exquisite dimples in her cheek, and seemed to flash in her sombre eyes as much as it played round her pretty lips; "there is a little girl, a ward of Sir Everard's, who has lately gone to live there, and she is to be my pupil."

"Ah, yes! I remember now hearing my aunt speak of the circumstance; but"—shrugging his shoulders, while a shadow fell on his face—"I have been too much worried with my own affairs to spare much time for other people's—a selfish confession, is it not?" laughing.

It was a puzzling one too, for Winnie could hardly think of "worry" in connection with him; nevertheless, his own words seemed to have called up an unpleasant train of thought, for the anxiety of his expression deepened, and it evidently was an effort, when he presently shook it off, and began pointing out to Winifred the different places of interest they passed. The remainder of the journey seemed very pleasant to the young girl; and she could only wonder at the flight of time, when at length they stopped at their destination.

"Ah! there is a servant from the Towers," observed her companion, as he assisted her to alight, and then signalled to a man in livery standing near. "I suppose I must wish you good-bye," he added, glancing down at the slim, black-draped figure before him, which, although as tall as the average of women, looked very small beside his own stalwart proportions. "Will the length of our acquaintance warrant my being permitted to shake hands with you, I wonder?" laughing as he extended his hand.

"If the length does not, the manner of its inauguration should do away with all formality," she replied, laughing too; then, in a lower and somewhat embarrassed tone—"Do you mind telling me your name? You know I have a debt to pay."

"That will keep. I am not afraid of your solvency, but I ought to have told you my name before—it is Eric Tresillian," saying which he helped her into the carriage, and then, raising his hat, turned aside to where a dog-cart was waiting, with a man in chocolate livery standing at the horse's head.

At all events, thought Winnie, as she was being borne swiftly along, through the fast-gathering shadows of the August evening, this Eric Tresillian had been very kind to her, and made her journey a great deal pleasanter than it would otherwise have been, and she in consequence was grateful. Her gratitude took the shape of closing her eyes and calling up before her mental vision that pleasant Saxon face, with its laughing blue eyes and sweet smile; and while occupied in these musings, even the natural nervousness she might be expected to feel at her approaching meeting with Lady Heathcote was forgotten, and she lost herself in the intricacies of a twilight dream, whose fairy fancies were too delicate and subtle to have borne the light of day.

By-and-bye the carriage passed through a long avenue of limes, and then drew up in front of a large mass of grey stone building,

which looked doubly stately and imposing in the gloom, and to the door of which a flight of stone steps led up from the terrace. Winifred was conducted through this door into the hall, and thence to the apartments appropriated for her own use—a sitting and bed-room communicating with each other, and made bright and cheerful by fresh chintz furniture and curtains. Here a cup of tea was presently brought to her by a rosy-cheeked maid, who looked curiously at the new governess, as if she were a specimen of a class that had not hitherto come under her notice. Winnie was glad of the tea, for travelling had wearied her, pleasant as the journey had been. After finishing her light repast she brushed her hair, exchanged her collar and cuffs for cleaner ones, and by the time she had completed these toilet operations the same apple-faced girl appeared to conduct her to Lady Heathcote. As she traversed the softly carpeted corridors, and descended the wide oak stairs—polished to a mirror-like brightness—she was quite ready to echo the opinion Tresillian had expressed as to her new residence being a very fine place; and glancing round at the evidences of wealth and good taste that everywhere met her gaze, she thought with the appreciation of a nature somewhat inclined to be fastidious, if not luxurious, that it would be, in any case, pleasant to live in the midst of so much that pleased the eye and appealed to one's love of the beautiful.

Sir Everard Heathcote was away in London, so his wife and daughter were alone in the drawing-room—an apartment that struck Winifred as being a marvel of brilliancy, sufficiently toned down by good taste as to just escape being gaudy. Here, amid the glitter of gilding, the rich hues of the furniture draperies, the lustre of wax lights reflected back from various mirrors in all parts of the room, Winnie beheld the mistress of the house—a woman of about forty-two, regally handsome and imperious looking, leaning against the purple cushions of her couch, and suggesting in the negligent grace of her pose, and a certain Eastern character in her loveliness, some Oriental empress, accustomed to having her every caprice obeyed, and exacting homage from the least to the greatest of her subjects. This idea struck the young governess immediately; and, whether from a native instinct of pride, or the antipathy, too subtle for analysis, of two opposite natures brought into contact, a rebellious sort of feeling arose in her breast, and there was something more than the humility of the governess expressed by her low bow as she stood before her employer.

"How do you do, Miss Brooke?" said Lady Heathcote, her gaze changing from its former languid expression, as she seemed to interpret by intuition the sudden alteration in the young girl's manner. "Have you had a pleasant journey?"

"Very pleasant, thank you."

"And I hope you are not too fatigued—you look pale, I think."

"I have been travelling all day, and am rather tired," confessed Winnie, taking the seat Lady Heathcote indicated by a wave of her hand, and becoming aware at the same time of another presence in the room, that of a girl of about her own age, tall, brown-haired, and handsome, who was seated in an arm-chair, with a novel in her hand, from which she had raised her eyes to glance at the new comer.

"Ah!" said Lady Heathcote, following Winnie's gaze. "Yolande this is Miss Brooke, Katie Dennison's governess." The young lady acknowledged the introduction by a nonchalant bow. "And now, Miss Brooke, let me explain to you your duties;" and then followed a list of her responsibilities with regard to her pupil, to which Winifred listened in silence, and afterwards took leave and repaired to her own room, vaguely dissatisfied with herself and the impression she fancied she had made on Lady Heathcote.

## CHAPTER II.

LIFE at Heathcote Towers for the first week or two she was there did not offer much variety, so far as Winifred was concerned; she found her pupil docile and intelligent, and managed to get on with her very well; but beyond a daily walk in the afternoon, and going to church on Sunday, her existence was about as monotonous as could well be imagined—a monotony that would not have been unpleasant if she had been older, or only desirous of taking a passive part in life's great drama; but being, as she was, full of vitality, the vivid blood flowing through her veins with all the swiftness of restless youth, she sometimes chafed under the enforced quiet, and often longed for companionship beyond that of little Katie Dennison. Sir Everard was still absent, and Lady and Miss Heathcote were out most days, so that she saw very little of either of them. Yolande, indeed, would sometimes stroll into the schoolroom, and talk for a few minutes when she had nothing better to do, but her visits were not very frequent, and never of long duration. Of the companion of her journey Winifred had as yet seen nothing, nevertheless she often thought of him—thought of him, not so much in connection with herself, as an embodiment of all she held noble in man; for with the ready imagination of girlhood she had filled in the rough sketch their short acquaintance had given her of his character, and completed a picture, perfect in its every detail.

One great delight she had at the Towers was its music room, which contained a very fine organ, on which she was privileged to play whenever it pleased her—a permission of which she availed herself to the utmost; for she was a musician to her finger tips, and had never before had equal facilities for the gratification of her tastes. One morning, not quite a fortnight after her arrival at the Tower, Winnie was honoured by a visit from Miss Heathcote, who came in directly after lessons were concluded, and seated herself in an arm-chair—the only one the room contained.

"I hope you don't mind my intrusion, Miss Brooke," she said, in her careless, nonchalant tones, as she leant back and clasped her hands behind her head. "The truth is, mamma is occupied in writing letters, and I can find nothing in the least bit amusing to do, so I have come to you."

"*Faute de mieux!*" exclaimed Winnie, laughing, and wondering if her visitor really intended to be insolent, or was only so unconsciously. "I'm afraid you won't find much here to amuse you," she added, with a smiling glance at the gloves, books and maps which the apartment boasted by way of ornaments, "unless, indeed, you came for instruction."

"Heaven forbid!" was Yolande's pious ejaculation. "No, the morning is fine, and I think I should like to go for a walk in search of blackberries." Was it fancy, or did Winnie see a deeper colour mount to her cheek as she spoke? "But papa does not like me to be out alone, so if you have nothing to do you might accompany me."

Winnie assented with alacrity, and immediately went to get ready; ten minutes afterwards the two girls were walking together down the avenue, at the bottom of which they turned into the high road, and from there through a labyrinth of lanes, with whose geography, however, Yolande professed herself well acquainted. In the meantime, a rambling sort of conversation was kept up between them, for Yolande Heathcote was naturally fond of talking, and Winnie was provided with monosyllabic answers at the proper time, and proved a very good listener; but although she spoke seldom, she was by no means inattentive to the sense of Yolande's remarks, which were made with the utmost candour, for the young heiress certainly did not think it worth while posing for the benefit of so insignificant a person as the governess, little imagining the keen powers of observation with which this same governess

was endowed, and all of which Winnie brought to bear on her study of her companion's character. That Yolande was vain and selfish she had already guessed—still for these faults, considering how petted she had been, there might have been excuses; but in addition, the girl possessed an overbearing and vindictive spirit, and deep passions, which she made no attempt whatever to control. Taken on the surface, however, she was a pleasant enough girl, sufficiently clever to be amusing, without verging on pedantry—vain, wilful, exacting of admiration, and with a perfect confidence in her own charms, but gifted with a certain fascination of manner strangers at least found it hard to resist.

It was a very fine September morning, the sky of that deep intense blue so rarely seen except in early autumn, the foliage just beginning to take golden and russet tints, the air full of balmy softness—altogether the perfection of weather for pedestrianism, and Winifred's spirits rose buoyantly under its influences, while she told herself that, after all, there must be a good deal of beauty and happiness in this fair world, especially for those who view it through the mediumship of youth!

"What place is that?" she asked presently of her companion, pointing to a large red brick house built in the Elizabethan style, and situated in the midst of a park on whose confines they were now standing.

"It is called Hilldrop Chase, and belongs to Lady Emma Tresillian," was the answer, and at the same moment a loud report of a gun close at hand made both girls start, and then come to a standstill in some alarm.

A few seconds later a retriever came bounding from behind some bushes, and was followed by a tall fair-headed man, clad in knickerbockers and velvet shooting jacket, at the sight of whom Winifred's heart began to beat rather more quickly than was its wont, while her cheeks grew suddenly very red.

"This is, indeed, a pleasant rencontre, Miss Heathcote," he said, lifting the cap from his sunny curls, and extending his hand as he advanced to Yolande's side. "You were coming to see my aunt, I hope?"

"Oh, no," returned Yolande, holding up the little basket, with which she had provided herself. "I came out intending to fill this with blackberries, and I knew none were so fine as those growing down there in the hollow, so I risked the walk for the sake of getting them. You don't know Miss Brooke, I think," she added, and proceeded to effect an introduction.

"Perhaps, in the eyes of Mrs. Grundy, I don't know Miss Brooke," said Tresillian, in those gay, frank tones that had rung in Winnie's ears ever since she first heard them; "but, as a matter of fact, we are already acquainted, for I had the pleasure of travelling down from town with her the day she first came here."

Yolande did not seem very pleased with the intelligence; however, the slight shade of annoyance that had come over her face vanished when Captain Tresillian asked to be allowed to accompany her on her blackberry-hunting excursion, and she was soon talking with all her accustomed gaiety—even more animated than usual. Poor Winifred felt herself playing the part of the disagreeable "third," and shrank as much as possible in the background, although Captain Tresillian contrived now and again to bring her into the conversation, and to take pains that she should not feel herself neglected—displaying, as he did so, an inimitable tact in preventing either her or himself from being forced into a position sufficiently prominent to challenge the attention of Yolande.

"Do you know what o'clock it is?" he said, by-and-bye, when he had piled Yolande's basket with the biggest and ripest berries he could find. "It is a quarter to one—much too late for you to think of getting back to the Towers in time for luncheon, so you have no alternative but to come home with me, and then I will see you safely back, later in the afternoon."

Yolande at first demurred a little, on the score of her mother not knowing where she was, but soon allowed her objections to be overruled, and let Captain Tresillian conduct her and her companion through the park, where the gorse was covered with faintly scented yellow blooms, and the heather made glowing patches of crimson fire between the fawny tints of the bracken.

"I told you some parts of W-shire were picturesque—don't you endorse my opinion?" said the officer in a low tone to Winnie, as he lingered for a moment at her side, while Yolande bent down to gather some heath.

"Entirely," she replied, foolishly pleased at this token of his not having forgotten their former conversation; and it was not lost on Tresillian that a brighter light seemed suddenly to leap into those solemn grey eyes of hers as she answered.

"I beg your pardon—I ought to have offered to pick you some heather," he exclaimed to Yolande, as she held up her bouquet for inspection.

"It is too late now, I have sufficient," she returned, laughing, so as to show her pretty white teeth, that were very small and even.

"At least, then, I may offer Miss Brooke some," he said, as he broke off a few sprays, and mixed them with some golden fern. He had not time to gather much, for Yolande was looking on rather impatiently, hardly appreciating the courtesy that would not permit the governess to think herself slighted.

Winifred took the little bouquet, and thanked him briefly as she put it in the bosom of her dress; and then they all walked on together until they came to the house, which they entered by a large oaken door that led into a hall, half covered with skins of different animals mounted on bright crimson cloth, and filled with various hunting and sporting trophies.

Passing through, Captain Tresillian took his young guests into a pretty morning room, where a tall and stately woman, very plainly, although richly dressed, received them. This was Lady Emma Tresillian, the widow of the former owner of the Chase, and its present mistress—a woman who ceded nothing to Lady Heathcote in hauteur and firmness of character, albeit their natures were cast in very different moulds. She welcomed her visitors with a well-bred cordiality that at once set Winifred at her ease, and she could but compare the polished courtesy of Lady Emma with the haughty indifference manifested by the mistress of the Towers towards her social inferiors, and which Winnie oftentimes found very galling—not that Lady Emma for one moment overlooked the distance that separated her from the young governess, only her very pride enabled her to ignore it during their intercourse. She seemed fond of Yolande, who was seated at luncheon between herself and Captain Tresillian; and Winifred fancied that afterwards, when they were walking round the pleasure grounds, Lady Emma purposely kept her at her side, so as to allow her nephew and Yolande an undisturbed  *tête-à-tête* . The young people played one game of tennis, and then it became necessary to think of returning, so wishing their hostess adieu, the two girls set out on their way back, accompanied by the officer, who saw them to the gates of the Towers, but would not come in, as he had an engagement for the evening.

"Don't you think Captain Tresillian very handsome?" said Yolande, after he had left them.

"Very," assented Winnie. "Is he heir to the Chase, or has he any older brother?" she added, presently.

"He is an only child—Lady Emma's nearest relative, as well as her husband's—for she was a Tresillian before she married. Of course, he is heir to the Chase, but at present he has only the allowance his aunt makes him, and is, I have heard, head over ears in debt." Yolande laughed, as if this latter fact were rather a recommendation than otherwise. "Lady Emma is anxious he should retire from the army and

settle down, but I don't know whether he himself is inclined to fall in with her views."

As Yolande finished speaking they entered the house, and Winnie took her way to the school-room, where she was met by her pupil, who informed her that Sir Everard had returned during her absence, and as a treat she—Katie—was to dine with the family. This being the case, the governess had tea alone, and, after the conclusion of her solitary meal, took her way to the music-room, which was situated at the west side of the house, and began to play some of Mendelssohn's "Lieder." By-and-bye it grew dusk, and there being no candles in the room, Winnie went to the window and drew back the heavy purple curtains that helped to darken it. The sun was setting in a gilded amethyst bed low down in the sky, and some of its radiance fell about the girl, as she stood intercepting the beams that came slanting through the painted glories of the stained glass. So absorbed was she in her contemplation of the sunset that the opening of the door passed unnoticed, and it was not until a slight noise made her turn round that she became aware the room was tenanted by a tall, grey-haired man, somewhat past middle age, who stood a little way off, silently regarding her. As she changed her position so that the light fell obliquely on her face, the gentleman uttered a quick exclamation, and stepped back a pace.

"I beg your pardon," faltered Winnie, in some confusion, recognising him from the description given her as the master of the house, and thinking he did not know who she was, "I am Winifred Brooke, the governess."

"It is I who should implore pardon," he said, recovering himself at the sound of her voice, and advancing with outstretched hand, "I was not aware there was anyone here, and—you startled me. Let me, however, atone for the singularity of my conduct by welcoming you to the Towers—it is rather late in the day to do so, but this is the first opportunity I have had, you know."

After this he continued talking for some time in a pleasant, kindly manner, such as was seldom practised either by his wife or daughter. He asked her how she liked her life at the Towers; if anything could be done to add to her comfort, if she got on well with her pupil, and various other questions that seemed to evince an interest in her welfare, for which Winnie felt very grateful. Then, finding she had come to the music-room for the purpose of practising on the organ, he requested her to play, and sat in the window recess while she obeyed, filling the gathering twilight with the wonderful harmonies of the great masters, until the dusky shadows fell so thickly that she could no longer see the keys. As she was about rising from her seat, he came to her side, and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"You are a true musician, my child—such an one as we rarely find, even in these days when art and music are estimated at their real value," he said. "I am delighted that we have such a source of pleasure in the house, for in future I hope to hear you play very often."

Then, shaking her hand, he left her, happier and more contented than she had been ever since Mrs. Ellis's death. Fate was not so cruel after all. Yolande had taken her for a walk; Sir Everard had spoken to her with the kindness of a friend; and—Captain Tresillian had given her a spray of heather!

### CHAPTER III.

AFTER this, it happened that Winifred was requested to take her pupil into the drawing-room most evenings as soon as dinner was over, and it usually occurred for her on these occasions to sit down to the piano, and sing or play, in accordance with the wishes of the master of the Towers, who was, as he had said, passionately fond of music. Lady Heathcote did not like this innovation; it did not suit her ideas of dignity that the governess should be thus far treated *en famille*; but auto-



ocrat as she was, her husband's authority was not to be questioned even by her, and when Sir Everard wished a thing it was seldom he failed to accomplish it.

Captain Tresillian was a frequent visitor at the Towers, whose inmates had all a welcome for him; and people began to whisper that it was for the sake of handsome Yolande he went so often—not that there was much in his manner to encourage such a supposition, for his behaviour to Lady Heathcote and Winifred was equally chivalrous as to Yolande herself, only that she seemed to claim his attention more as a right.

One morning Sir Everard and his wife were about driving to the county town; but before starting, the former, who appeared to have taken a great fancy to the young governess, came to her in the schoolroom.

"Did you not say you wanted to procure some books and music for Katie?" he asked, as Winnie pushed aside the maps over which she and her pupil had been poring, with a little sigh of relief. "If you will make haste and put on your bonnet, you can come with us to W—, and get them at once."

The young girl lost no time in arraying herself, and then took her seat in the well-appointed barouche, where Lady Heathcote was leaning back, attired in the rich silks, and deep colours which she usually affected, and which suited her peculiar style of beauty to admiration.

They drove to the principal hotel, where the horses were put up, and then Winnie prepared to accompany Lady Heathcote on her shopping expedition, while Sir Everard proceeded towards the club. Just as they were leaving the hotel, Winnie noticed that a gentleman who had been standing at the door, watching them alight from the carriage, and who had stared very curiously at Lady Heathcote, stepped up to a groom, and addressed to him some question that evidently related to the baronet's wife, for, before answering, the man turned to look at her. Her attention drawn by this incident, Winnie observed that the gentleman followed them, keeping, however, far enough in the rear for his espionage to remain unnoticed, until they went into a stationer's shop, which he also entered. He was a man of about forty—tall, dark and handsome, with an Italian sort of beauty, not unlike Lady Heathcote's own, only cast in a larger and coarser mould. As the baronet's wife stepped up to a table to look at some photographs spread out for view, he followed, and laid his hand on her arm.

"Agatha!"

Lady Heathcote had drawn back with a haughty gesture of indignant surprise at the familiarity of his greeting; but as she looked into his face a sudden change came over her own, which grew very pale—white even to the lips.

"Ah, I see the years that have passed since we met have not changed me beyond recognition; but then fraternal affection should defy time," he said with a quiet laugh, that might have had in it some gratified malice at her discomfiture. "By-the-bye, Agatha, the enemy has not dealt at all unkindly with you—you have changed very little since I saw you last, except that you have developed a slight tendency towards *embonpoint*, which is by no means unbecoming."

"Come out into the street," she exclaimed quickly in Italian. "Miss Brooke, you can get what you want, and stay here until my return," she added in English, and then left the astonished girl, and went outside with the stranger.

"I can hardly believe it is you, Gustave," she said, when they were alone, "I thought you had died in the war."

"I did not die—I was severely wounded, and believe my name appeared in the list of killed; but I wrote to you, and did not get any answer to my letters, although I have every reason to believe you received them. I sent them to Greystoke Castle."

"Mrs. Greystoke is dead," she said briefly, her brows knit together in a contemplative sort of frown, "and I am married."

"I know it, and most advantageously too. Certainly in my wildest dreams, I never thought of greeting you as 'my lady' after—"

"You see your dreams are not infallible," she interrupted quickly. "But how did you learn this?"

"Easily enough—I was always of an inquiring turn of mind, and it is the simplest thing in the world to put a few leading questions, if only you are discriminating in your choice of an informant," nonchalantly. "So you live at Heathcote Towers, a very fine ancestral seat some five miles away?"

She made an affirmative movement of her head, but did not speak.

"Whither you, of course, intend inviting me," he added, looking at her with a sidelong glance from his almond-shaped eyes.

"I do not see the good of your coming to the Towers—we never did agree, and it is not at all likely now time has made our peculiarities more prominent than we ever shall," she said hastily. "Tell me, what brought you to W—?"

"The races," he answered with commendable brevity; "but I will give you a little epitome of my history if you will listen quietly. I was about telling you that some few years after my arrival in America I happened to meet with a lady who had the good taste to fall in love with me. She was rich, she was generous, and she was middle-aged; so I married her, and we lived together in tolerable comfort until her death, which took place nearly two years ago. She had sufficient idea of my worth to leave me all the money of which she was possessed, and I thought I could not do better than come to Europe in order to spend it. I arrived in England six weeks ago with a friend, who took me to a tumbledown old place of his in Essex, and together we came here the day before yesterday."

"Then you are rich?" said Lady Heathcote, with rather less asperity in her tone.

"I was—pardon the correction. Unfortunately for me, I have extravagant tastes. I like play, and I like horses, which two amusements are not to be had for nothing, and, in short, I have contrived to lose the greater part of my lamented spouse's money. But you, Agatha, you must be wealthy, and well able to help needy relations," laughing maliciously.

The angry negative that was on her lips was not destined to be spoken, for at that moment she suddenly came face to face with her husband, who had come to meet her, and there was nothing to be done but present her brother to him. Sir Everard looked, as he felt, very much astonished at the introduction; he had never before seen his wife's brother, who was away in America at the time of their marriage, and who, he was led to believe, had died during the war. Nevertheless, the baronet immediately pressed Mr. Devereux to return at once with them; his hospitable spirit would not admit the idea of his remaining at an hotel when the Towers was so near; and Devereux himself seemed nothing loth to accept the invitation. They all three therefore walked back to the shop where Winnie, having finished her purchases, was patiently awaiting them, not quite free from inquisitiveness on her own score concerning the mysterious stranger, whom Sir Everard now presented to her. Lady Heathcote did not linger long over her shopping, and announced herself anxious to return home; so they all repaired to the hotel, where the carriage was ordered; and Devereux, having directed his luggage should be sent on, and scribbled a note to his friend, accompanied the others to the Towers. Lady Heathcote was very silent during the drive, and on reaching home was about proceeding straight to her own room when Yolande crossed the hall, coming from the library, and was called to his side by her father, who introduced her to his guest.

"What! my niece?" exclaimed Devereux.

"I am afraid she can hardly lay claim to such a title," returned the baronet, smiling; "Yolande is the daughter of my first wife, but," with a grateful glance at Lady Heath-

cote, "Agatha has never let her know the loss of a mother."

At this moment Lady Heathcote, who was standing at Winnie's side, took hold of her arm, saying, in a low voice—

"Come upstairs with me—I feel faint," and somewhat surprised, the young girl helped her to her room. Arrived there she sank down on a couch, and, pointing to a bottle of sal volatile on the dressing-table, directed Winnie to pour some into a wine-glass full of water, which she drank.

"My unexpected meeting with my brother has agitated me a good deal," she remarked, as if in excuse; "besides, I have not been well lately, and a little upsets my nerves. You need not say anything of this, Miss Brooke," she added, sharply.

"Certainly not," returned Winifred; and then, finding she could be of no further use, she quietly left the room. She had no sooner gone than Lady Heathcote rose, and began pacing backwards and forwards with increasing excitement.

"I was afraid this would happen some time—I had a presentiment of it!" she exclaimed, unconscious in her vehemence that she was speaking aloud; "and to think while so many have fallen, he should be spared to come back and torment me!"

She continued her walk for some little time, her hands clasped tightly across her breast, and her brows making a straight, slender line above her sombre eyes—evidently her musings were of an unpleasant nature.

"But surely I can outwit him, after all!" she said at last, stopping and giving her foot an impatient stamp. "I can make him understand his interests and mine are identical, and he will then have no motive for speaking of the past; and, as to later events—why he knows nothing about them, and I must take care his ignorance be not enlightened. At any rate"—drawing a deep breath—"I will not anticipate evils; it is time enough to meet them when they come."

Having arrived at this incontrovertible decision, she bathed her face and hands, and then descended to the dining-room, slightly pale, certainly, but with as collected a mien as if her tranquillity had never been disturbed, and perfectly able to fulfil all the duties her position as hostess entailed.

#### CHAPTER IV.

HAVING once taken up his quarters at Heathcote Towers, Mr. Devereux appeared in no hurry to quit them, but lingered on, contriving to amuse himself very well with shooting in the daytime, and billiards in the evening; or, when the weather did not permit of the former, and the time hung heavily on his hands, he would find his way to the school-room, and there give Winifred the benefit of his company. Indeed, she of all the household saw most of him, for Yolande did not like her stepmother's brother, and in her carelessly-haughty way allowed him to see the antipathy she bore him, while she as much as possible avoided his society. Sir Everard, from long habit, spent the greater part of the day in his study, and his wife rarely issued from her dressing-room till luncheon, and was afterwards employed either in making or receiving calls, so that on those days, when he was not out with his gun, Devereux had only the alternative of his own company or that of the governess, and he infinitely preferred the latter. Lady Heathcote was perfectly aware of his frequent presence in the school-room, for Winifred herself took care she should know it; but, so far from evincing displeasure, she seemed to experience a certain relief that he should thus dispose of his spare time.

As to Winnie, her life was certainly much brighter than during the first part of her residence at the Towers—perhaps because the perpetual round of lessons was varied by the society of Devereux, who was not only a clever man, but had travelled much and seen a good

deal of the world—perhaps because the liking Sir Everard had manifested towards her continued, and she, in consequence, frequently spent her evenings in the drawing-room, but chiefly because at least two or three times a week her eyes were gladdened by the sight of Eric Tresillian—albeit Eric Tresillian with a certain worried look on his face that had of late become habitual.

And so time went on until December came, and Yolande began to be very busy preparing for some theatricals, which she had arranged should take place the week before Christmas. Winnie's services were, of course, called into requisition; for Miss Heathcote was quite sharp enough to be aware that the young governess, with her ready intelligence and quick d-f fingers, was no valueless acquisition, and seemed to imagine that as soon as Katie Dennison's morning lessons were over she had a perfect right to the remainder of Winnie's time. The young girl did not object, although, perhaps, if Yolande had been aware of the reason of her ready compliance she might not have felt so much at ease; but Yolande was too wrapped up in her own concerns to spare much time for other people, and, besides, her confidence in her own power was such that it had never entered her head to be jealous of the attention Tresillian, in the quietest and most unobtrusive manner possible, yet contrived to pay the governess.

One afternoon, in the second week of December, the two girls, with Tresillian and Devereux, were together in the billiard-room, which, for the nonce, had been metamorphosed into a theatre, and at one end of which a stage had been already erected.

"At last," said Yolande, looking up from a pile of old silk and brocade dresses, which she had sorted out from the wardrobe of some defunct ancestress, and to whose alteration and adaptation for present requirement Winifred had undertaken to see. "At last, I think I may say all the costumes are arranged, and that is one great thing off my mind; now we must see to getting some old pictures to hang up for the drawing-room scene. Papa tells me there are lots in the turret chamber, so we had better go and select what we want at once; and you may as well bring a cloth with you, Miss Brooke; there will be sure to be plenty of dust on the pictures, for the room has not been entered within my remembrance."

It bore evident traces of its disuse; cobwebs were hanging in filmy festoons from the ceiling and across the quaint little mullioned windows that seemed to have been made for the express purpose of admitting as small a portion of light as possible; while the accumulated dust of years lay in feathery thickness on everything the room contained; but this was unheeded by the visitors, the feminine portion of whom had attired themselves with a view to utility—Winnie being dressed in a gown of coarse dark serge, unlike in its simplicity, and only relieved at the throat by a bit of scarlet geranium Devereux had given her, while Yolande had tied one of her maid's holland aprons round her daintier costume.

"You had better let me do that," said Captain Tresillian, advancing as Winifred—always the most active of the party—began turning to the light the faces of the pictures that were stacked up against the wall. "Some of these frames are rather heavy—at least for such little hands as yours," he added in a lower tone, that was intended only for her ears; and Winnie, colouring, slightly stepped on one side, and contented herself with dusting the canvases as he handed them out.

"Why, what have we here?" he exclaimed, as he came upon one which seemed much more modern than the rest. "What a sweet face! Do you know for whom it is intended, Miss Heathcote?"

They all pressed round, and Yolande shook her head in answer to Tresillian's question.

The portrait was one of a woman very young, and possessing a delicacy of feature and purity of expression that might have belonged to a Madonna, only that the face was

shadowed into sadness by a pair of large, sweet, and intensely mournful eyes.

"If you don't know who the original is, there is no difficulty in supposing who it might be," remarked Devereux with emphasis, "Why, it's the very image of Miss Brooke!"

Both Yolande and Tresillian followed the direction of his eyes, and they were forced to acknowledge his observation a just one, and the resemblance really very striking; there was the same delicate oval of the face, the same bronze gold hair, the same arch of the brows—in fact, the two faces only differed in expression, that of the picture being pensive almost to sadness, while Winnie's proclaimed the bright insouciance of youth and a naturally cheerful disposition.

"Such coincidences do occur sometimes in a most unaccountable way," said Yolande, shrugging her shoulders, and lightly dismissing the subject—for it was ever a trial to her that another should occupy men's attention when she was by. "I think six of these pictures will be enough for our purpose. I will send one of the servants to bring them downstairs."

Saying which, she began descending the narrow stone steps, and the others could do no less than follow, although Winnie would have much liked lingering to steal another glance at this pictured image of herself. She had an opportunity of doing so later on, when it was brought down with four or five others to the improvised theatre, where Sir Everard and Lady Heathcote had joined the younger people, in order to observe the progress of the alterations.

"We all had a surprise in the turret chamber," remarked Tresillian—who was much interested in what had just taken place—as he drew forward the picture that had challenged their attention. "Whom does this represent, Sir Everard?"

The baronet started, and bent eagerly forward.

"It is the likeness of my mother!" he exclaimed. "It disappeared suddenly many years ago when the gallery was undergoing repair, and all the pictures were rehung. I made many efforts to find it, but they were all unsuccessful."

He continued gazing at it in absorbed attention, and an awkward silence ensued, broken at last by Devereux.

"We were saying what a resemblance the picture bears to Miss Brooke."

"You are right," returned the baronet, rousing himself, and looking from the pensive countenance on the canvas to Winnie's fair young face. "I was greatly startled by the likeness when I first saw Miss Brooke, and when her features were in repose, as she gets animated there is less resemblance."

"It can hardly be pleasant for Miss Brooke to hear herself thus discussed," put in Yolande, rather crossly. "I'll relieve you from the embarrassment of your position by giving you something to do,"—turning to Winnie. "I want you to go to the Vicarage and arrange with Mrs. Thurston about the crosses for the church decoration—say I am going to W—tomorrow, and will get them if she will let me know how many she requires."

Winifred had no course open to her but obedience, although she would have much preferred remaining at home on that particular afternoon. However, she quietly left the room to put on her walking attire, and was just going out of the hall door when Devereux joined her.

"Permit me to accompany you as far as the village," he said, proceeding to light a cigar. "I know you don't object to smoking"—*en parenthèse*—"and I trust I may flatter myself enough to say the same regarding my society."

Winnie made no reply; truth to tell she was not particularly well pleased at his escort, more especially as she saw Yolande and Eric Tresillian at the window, apparently watching their departure—the former with a slight mocking smile on her lips, that made the angry

colour rush in a crimson flood to Winnie's cheeks.

There was not much conversation between the two as they proceeded. Devereux finding his companion disinclined to talk became in his turn silent, and gave himself up to the enjoyment of his cigar. The walk to the Vicarage was a tolerably long one, and led through the wood, and then past the village of Heathcote; but before they reached the latter place the sky became very much overcast, and a few minutes later a heavy hailstorm came rattling down, making them hasten on as fast as they could.

"What a confounded nuisance!" exclaimed Devereux, throwing away his cigar and buttoning his coat well up about his throat. "We had better shelter till the storm is spent."

This opinion being shared by Winnie, they knocked at the door of the next cottage they came to, and were answered by a very clean, respectable-looking woman, who cordially invited them to enter, and placed for them two chairs in front of the bright fire burning in the little grate. The room was also tenanted by another and much older female, who got up, and bobbed an old-fashioned curtsy to the new comers.

"It is a storm, surely," remarked she who had opened the door to them—a fresh-faced, comely-looking woman of about forty; "you would soon have got wet to the skin, miss—have you far to walk home?"

"To Heathcote Towers," replied Winnie. "Heathcote Towers!" repeated the woman, apparently interested. "I know that place well; I was nurse there many years ago, when Miss Yolande was a little baby; in fact, I went there directly after the first Lady Heathcote's death, and should not have left only through my husband being in Australia and wanting me to join him."

"Then you have been to Australia?" questioned Winnie, more from the necessity of saying something than from any particular interest she felt in her hostess's travelling experiences.

"Yes, miss; but my husband died there, so I came back home again, and Lady Heathcote was good enough to get me a situation as matron in an institution in Yorkshire. I came down from there the day before yesterday on a visit to my mother"—indicating the older woman with a wave of her hand—"she is very old now, and couldn't bear the railway journey, or I should have had her to spend her Christmas with me. It's not often I can get leave to be away."

"Then you were at Heathcote Towers when the present Lady Heathcote was married?" said Devereux, suddenly manifesting an interest in the conversation.

The former nurse (whose name she proceeded to inform her guest was Oldham) replied in the affirmative, and began to talk of various events that had occurred during her term of office under the reign of Baby Yolande, to all of which Devereux listened with more than ordinary interest. Winifred at last out of short her loquacity, so far as she herself was concerned, by going to the window and announcing that as the storm was now over she would proceed to the Vicarage, a distance of about half-a-mile.

"Then I will stay here the while, and return home with you after your visit is over," said Devereux, rising to open the door for her.

"If Mrs. Thurston keeps me long I shall go back the nearer way, so as to be in time for Katie's tea," rejoined Winnie, to whom his escort had seemed singularly distasteful ever since she had caught Tresillian's glance as he watched her from the window; and not staying to listen to Devereux's remonstrances, she sped away down the village street, while he paused a moment to look after the slim, graceful little figure before closing the door and returning to his seat. Then he resumed his conversation with Mrs. Oldham concerning the Heathcotes, and her residence at the Towers.

Meanwhile Winifred, having executed her commission at the Vicarage, took her way



homewards, but not through the village, feeling herself in that frame of mind when a long solitary walk has charms of its own which companionship—at least, that of Mr. Devereux—could not offer. Luckily for her the weather had improved, the heavy clouds having rolled away from the sky overhead, out of whose dark clearness a few stars were glittering with a keen steely lustre, sufficiently indicative of frost.

The dusk had come on rather quickly; and although it was not yet five o'clock it would have been quite dark but for the faint wan radiance given by the young moon, whose slender arc was just rising from above the trees. Winnie's nearest way to the Towers after she had left the Vicarage about a quarter of a mile behind lay through the wood, across one corner of which the path cut; and when she found herself beneath the dark shadows of the firs she was half inclined to regret that she had not availed herself of Devereux's offer, for the loneliness was extreme, and rather more than she had bargained for. However, she pushed bravely on, chiding herself for her silly cowardice, and she had got some little distance when she descried a form in front, rapidly approaching her. Doubtful as to who it might be she drew back to one side, so as to allow the man—for that it belonged to the male species she could see—to pass, but instead of doing this, he stopped just in front of her.

"Is that you, Miss Brooke?" he said, in tones of some slight surprise; and at the sound of Captain Tresillian's voice Winifred came forward, rather embarrassed, but greatly relieved notwithstanding. "Are you alone?" continued the officer, looking round as if he imagined someone might be still lurking in the bushes: "I thought you started under the protection of Mr. Devereux?"

"He was good enough to see me as far as the village, but I left him there in a cottage."

"In a cottage!" repeated Tresillian. "What on earth is he doing there?"

Whereupon Winifred proceeded to explain the circumstances under which they had taken shelter.

"And very likely Mr. Devereux is waiting for you still; at least, he was not at the Towers when I left," said Eric, and Winnie fancied there was rather a malicious smile on his face as he spoke, but was not quite sure, because of the darkness. "How was it you did not let him bring you back?"

"For the simple reason that I preferred being alone!" exclaimed the young girl, sharply, rather nettled at Tresillian's manner.

"Then I suppose I must not offer to accompany you through the wood, as I was on the point of doing?"

Winnie did not answer; she knew quite well, that, independently of her timidity, the mere sense of having Eric Tresillian at her side—of hearing his voice and feeling that at least for a few moments there was no one to come between them, would be in itself sufficient to make her heart beat with a swift, glad rapture that only woke under the influence of his presence; for—both as she was to admit the fact even to herself—she could not wholly deny that this yellow-haired soldier had taken a place in her life such as no one else ever could, or ever would fill—that he was to her of all the world noblest, bravest, and best!

"Does silence give consent, or not?" asked Eric, recovering his good humour, which had been slightly marred by some remarks Yolande had made as they witnessed the departure of Devereux with the governess. "At any rate, I'll interpret it according to my own pleasure, and see you safely as far as the avenue."

Winifred still remained silent; so Tresillian turned, and they both began walking in the direction of the Towers—not quickly, for the path was rather narrow, and in parts overgrown by brambles, which, together with the dim light, made the exercise of some caution necessary.

"Take my arm, Miss Brooke, and then I can give you some assistance in getting along this thorny way," said Tresillian, presently, and extending his arm as he spoke.

Winifred hesitated—not that she was prodigious, but some maidenly scruples she could not have explained prevented her from at once accepting the proffered aid.

"Thank you, I think I can manage, and it will be lighter when we get a little farther on."

"And in the meantime you run the risk of spraining your ankle, getting your dress torn, or some mischief or another!" exclaimed Eric, with a laugh. "I shall not allow that so long as I have power to prevent it." Thus saying he drew her arm through his with a gentle force she made no effort to resist; and they walked quietly onward through the dusky winter silence of the wood, the moonlight falling in a fine dark tracery of twig and bough through the leafless trees on such open patches of sward as the undergrowth did not cover.

To Winnie that walk was as the breath of the rose of Eden, that Orientals say we all inhale once in our lives. It seemed dim and unreal, but its unreality was sweeter far than anything in life of which she had ever dreamt—its dimness a delirium of joy the like of which had never before poured its delicious ecstasy through her veins. She knew quite well the distance separating her from Eric, and therefore the utter hopelessness of the feelings she bore him, and she had tried to crush it with all the strength of her feeble might. As well might she endeavour to stem with her foot the torrent of some mighty river, rushing onward with a fiery impetuous force that laughed at restraint! Then the knowledge had come to her that this must be the love for which Juliet and Francescaded—the love that comes but once and is lost only in eternity! But with a certain recklessness inherent in her nature she threw all consideration of consequence to the winds; she determined to seize the pleasure of the present—to enjoy to the full the few fleeting moments of happiness offered to her, and let the future take care of itself.

"What a difference half an hour can make in one's temperament," exclaimed Eric at last, *ad propos* of nothing in particular. "Do you know, as I was walking along here before I met you, I was feeling depressed—miserable—out of conceit with myself and the whole world, and now—well, I have no desire to feel happier than I do now. I wonder what the reason is."

Winnie wondered too, but discreetly held her peace, although the hand lying on his arm trembled a little.

"I think there must be in you some subtle spell, potent to charm away everything that is not pleasant," he went on, peering down into the delicate face, to which the starlight seemed to have given an added softness. "What answer can you make to this charge of witchcraft?"

"I can only say that if I possess the power I myself am proof against its exercise," she replied, trying to speak lightly, and hardly succeeding, despite the self control on which she prided herself. It seemed to her the rest of the way was very soon accomplished, and that she was standing at the top of the avenue with her hand in Eric's, wishing him goodbye, almost before she had realized the fact of being with him. They neither of them appeared to pay much heed to the wet grass and mud under foot, the cold night air blowing about their faces, or the more alarming prospects of Lady Heathcote's displeasure if she heard of this evening walk; truth to tell, they never cast a thought to any of these things.

"It has been a pleasant walk, has it not?" said Tresillian, preparing reluctantly to leave her. "I only wish it had been six times as long!"

Perhaps Winnie's heart echoed the wish, but she made no answer to this remark, and there seemed to Eric unnecessary haste in the manner she said adieu. After she had left him, he stood watching her until she disappeared in the house, and then he turned; and as he strode rapidly along on his way to the Chase, Longfellow's description of Evangeline came into his head; and although he was not, as a rule,

much given to quoting poetry, he said it over to himself:—

"Homeward serenely she walked, with God's benediction upon her;  
When she had passed, it seemed like the ceasing of exquisite music.  
She, too, would bring to her husband's house delight and abundance,  
Filling it full of love . . . ."

#### CHAPTER V.

THE rest of the week passed very rapidly; all the household at the Towers were busy preparing for the theatricals and the ball that was to follow. Winifred especially had her hands full, for Yolande seemed to look to her to see that everything was going on right, and she had, moreover, undertaken to learn a part which had been thrown up at the last minute by one of the young ladies of the neighbourhood, and which Yolande distractedly entrusted her to fill.

At last the eventful night came, and early in the evening the girls went upstairs to put on their theatrical costumes, which Miss Heathcote had decided they should retain for the rest of the evening—the motive for this determination being the fact that hers was a very pretty one, and she did not think any other she might select would equally become her. She certainly looked handsome enough when, her toilette completed, she stepped back to view the effect in the large mirror before which she stood, a triumphant smile of pleased vanity dawning on her scarlet lips as she turned to Lady Heathcote, who was watching her.

"Don't I look well?" she said, shaking out the rich folds of her stiff satin dress, which was made after the fashion in vogue at the Court of France during the last century, while her hair was drawn back from her face over a cushion, and powdered.

"You look *quaintly*," replied Lady Heathcote, kissing her. "If you were my own daughter I could not be prouder of you. But are you not going to wear any flowers?"

"Yes, only I thought I would let Miss Brooke arrange them—no one manages flowers so artistically as she," returned the girl, taking in her hand a basket of rare hothouse blossoms that had been sent from the Tresillians, and at the sight of which her eyes seemed to grow more luminous. "Let us go to her room at once."

Lady Heathcote followed her, and they found the young governess just beginning to dress. She uttered an exclamation of real and sincere admiration as she saw Yolande, who, with all her jewels flashing in the gas light, was indeed a brilliant apparition.

"I want you to arrange a wreath for my hair," said Yolande, intensely gratified by the effect she produced. "Why, where did you get your flowers from?" she added, in astonishment, as her eyes rested on a box filled with lilies, and surrounded by delicate maiden-hair fern, lying on the dressing-table.

"I don't know, they came by post," stammered Winnie, growing crimson under the suspicious looks both ladies bent upon her; and to avoid further inquiries she commenced her task, which she was fortunate enough to perform entirely to Yolande's satisfaction. No more questions concerning the flowers were asked, Yolande being in a hurry to get downstairs; and as soon as she and Lady Heathcote were gone, Winnie completed her own toilette—with which, it must be confessed, she took a good deal more than ordinary pains. Her costume was not a new one, like Miss Heathcote's, having, indeed, been fashioned by her own hands, from the Court-dress of some dead and gone Lady Heathcote; but it was of the same style, and could not have suited her better if it had been a production of Worth or Elise. The innocent pleasure with which she gazed at her reflection in the glass, when, robed in the stiff brocade, and with her bronze-gold hair drawn back from the pure brow, she stood before it, had no leaven of the vanity that had shone in Yolande's eyes a few minutes ago; and if a

tremulously conscious smile hovered about her while she placed the lilies in her bosom, it was less attributable to the fact that she herself looked as fair and sweet as the flowers than for the hope that twined about the fragile white blossoms.

As soon as she was ready she went downstairs into the improvised green-room, where the performers were fortifying themselves for the approaching ordeal with coffee and cake; and directly she entered she was approached by Tresillian—looking very handsome in his Court attire.

"May I offer you some refreshments?" he said aloud; then, as he held a cup of coffee for her to take, he added in a lower tone, "and may I, at the same time, tell you how charming you look?"

She did not reply; her tongue, usually fluent enough, found nothing to say in answer to the compliment, and her eyessank beneath the bold bright glances they met; but Tresillian dared not linger long at her side, for Yolande imperiously called him away, and his place was taken by Gustave Devereux.

"Lilies!" he exclaimed, his quick eyes noticing the flowers in her dress. "Did you get them from the Towers' conservatories?"

"No, they were sent me."

"Ah! by your friends in town, perhaps. By-the-by, Miss Brooke, do your relations live in London?"

"I have no relations."

"What!" started out of his good manners. "I have no relations," repeated Winifred steadily, but with a sort of defiance in her voice. "I have neither father, mother, sister nor brother—I myself am the sole representative of my family. There, Mr. Devereux, you have my history."

"But how long have you been in this solitary condition?"

"So long that I can't remember when I was otherwise. Is your catechism finished?"

It is possible he might have pursued the subject still further, only at that moment Winifred was called away, and, as he had no opportunity of speaking to her again, he retired to the billiard-room, where the guests were already assembled, and took his place amongst the audience; and shortly afterwards the curtain drew up and the representation of the play began. It was, as Yolande had anticipated, a brilliant success, with none of those hitches that are of so frequent occurrence in the generality of amateur affairs, and at its conclusion the young heiress was enthusiastically congratulated and flattered to her heart's content on the part she had taken.

But, alas! for the perfection of human happiness! In the very zenith of her triumph—as she stood smiling, imperial, and gracious, the centre of a little knot of admirers, the acknowledged queen of an assemblage where all the youth and beauty of the county were represented—her cup of incense was dashed with bitterness by the sight of Eric Tresillian at Winifred's side, and by hearing questions as to who the pretty girl with the lilies could be. Her contemptuous rejoinder of "the governess" did little towards modifying the admiration evoked by Winnie's delicate fairness—at least amongst the male portion of the guests, of whom many were most anxious to procure an introduction.

"You'll give me the first valse," said Tresillian to Winifred, as they followed the general exodus to the hall, which had been already cleared.

"I don't know whether Lady Heathcote will approve of my dancing at all," she returned, playing nervously with her fan.

"Oh, nonsense! I'll soon satisfy your conscience on that score. Lady Heathcote—to the mistress of the Towers who was passing at the time—'here is Miss Brooke refusing to dance because she fears you won't like it—please set her scruples at rest at once and for ever.'"

Lady Heathcote hesitated a moment, but only for a moment. She knew how strange a refusal would sound in the ears of Tresillian, to

whom she was anxious to be especially gracious; so she gave a smiling assent to his request as she went on her way towards Yolande, who with the great man of the county was preparing to open the ball. As she departed her brother came up.

"May I have the first dance, Miss Brooke?"

Winnie shook her head, and showed the programme Eric had provided her with, and on which he had already inscribed his name.

"Well, if the first is engaged, let me have some later on," said Devereux, taking it from her, and scribbling his initials. "Thank you"—returning it and walking away.

"How many has he appropriated?" inquired Eric, looking over her shoulder at the card. "Three vases!—What impudence!"

"Only the same number as you have taken," remarked the girl, looking up at him somewhat coquettishly; "and yet, I daresay, you would resent the charge of 'impudence.'"

"That's a very different thing. I have known you longer, and besides—"

But he did not add what there was besides, for just then the band struck up "Dreamland," and a minute afterwards he was spinning round to its soft strains, Winnie's bright head about on a level with his shoulder.

"Why, you are as light as a feather, or a snowflake, or a ball of thistle-down!" he exclaimed, as they paused, and he gazed into his partner's face with something deeper even than admiration. Winifred had never in her life looked so lovely; the lustrous eyes sparkling, the scarlet lips slightly parted, the cheeks flushed with the vivid crimson of a pomegranate's red heart, the white bosom heaving—all betokened that she had yielded herself without reserve to the intoxication of the moment—of the music, the light, the colour and brilliancy by which she was surrounded; and the demure little governess was lost in this smiling, dainty lady, with her skirt of trailing brocade, and the lilies gleaming at her breast. Tresillian caught his breath sharply as he looked at her.

She had no lack of admirers. Partner after partner was brought to her—chiefly by Sir Everard himself, who seemed to take a fatherly interest and pleasure in her triumph, which he did his best to augment, and for the first time Winnie learned the dangerous lesson of the power her fairness gave her. Gustave Devereux especially lingered by her side, murmuring compliments into her ears, and striving hard to monopolise her attention; and there were not lacking those who declared he must be must be over head and ears in love with the governess thus to distinguish her by such marked signs of favour. Eric Tresillian heard these whispers, and they angered him.

"Let us go into the billiard-room—it is cooler there than here," he said to Winnie on the conclusion of a valse they had together; and she, being very warm, allowed him to take her to the deserted theatre, which apparently no one else had thought of as a retreat.

"Come into this corner," said Eric, leading her towards a velvet couch close by the stage, and arranging the cushions for her, while he took her fan and began waving it gently to and fro. "Does that cool you?"

"Beautifully."

"Have you enjoyed yourself this evening?" he inquired presently, and she answered with enthusiasm—

"I never was so happy in my life before!"

"Ah, you are a true woman!" he exclaimed somewhat bitterly. "Admiration and flattery together create a feminine Paradise! Besides, you have been marked out for the attentions of one of the handsomest men in the room—Devereux."

A slight smile hovered round Winnie's lips.

"I think," softly, "my pleasure would have been just the same had Mr. Devereux been absent."

"Is this true?" he said, his brow clearing and his hand resting on hers as it lay on her lap. "But I need not ask, I am sure I can

trust you, Winnie—may I call you Winnie? It is such a pretty word."

"Where is your logic, Captain Tresillian?" she laughed, but blushing as she strove to disengage her hand. "I see no connection between the prettiness of my name and the permission you seem to take for granted of being allowed to call me by it."

"No? Have you never heard of Love's logic?" his voice growing less and his breath coming very quickly. "Don't you know, Winnie, that I love you?" he said, making prisoner both her hands and pressing them against his heart. "What do you say, my darling?"

She said nothing, but he felt a little shiver run through her frame, and she made no effort to withdraw herself from the clasp tightening around her.

"Are you willing to become my wife, dear?"

Then remembrance seemed suddenly to come to her and she drew back, all the love and light fading from her face.

"You don't know what you are asking, Captain Tresillian," she said, speaking very rapidly, as if she feared her resolution might fail her. "Let me tell you first something of my history."

And then she bravely repeated all she had heard from Mrs. Ellis on her deathbed, her face growing paler as she proceeded, but her voice steady to the end. He listened attentively, and said nothing until she had finished.

"This makes no difference, dearest—it is for yourself I love you, not for what your parents may or may not have been. But I must not woo you under false pretences either, and I also have a confession to make. You may have thought because I have all the appliances of wealth, and am surrounded by luxuries that I am a rich man myself—such is not the case. In point of fact, I have not only not a penny to call my own, but am also deeply in debt—most assuredly I am not in a position to ask any woman to be my wife; only I saw Devereux hovering about you, and I was so afraid of losing you that I determined risking all in an endeavour to discover whether you cared for me sufficiently to wait. As you know, I am wholly dependent on my aunt, and she is very anxious I should marry Miss Heathcote—in-deed, she has promised that if I do so she will at once pay all my debts and settle an annual income upon me, so that I am afraid she would not be likely to consent to my engagement with you, and I should therefore wish to keep it secret for awhile, and in the meantime I must try to get an appointment. I have a friend who has influence with the government, and he may perhaps procure me one. It is not a very brilliant destiny to offer. Are you willing to share it with me, Winnie?"

Was she willing? would she not have gone barefoot to the end of the world, most gladly if he had been by her side. She laid her head on his shoulder with a little excited sob, while he tenderly kissed the red lips, that had never before been yielded to a lover's caresses, and called her by every endearing name he could think of.

"I must sell out of the army," he added presently, "and alter my mode of living. I have been very reckless and extravagant," remorsefully, "but I had no one to think of besides myself, and I never stayed to calculate consequences—I thought, too, my aunt would have paid my debts, as she has hitherto done, but she seems to think it a fitting opportunity of prevailing on me to settle down, and says she will only absolve me from my liabilities on condition I marry Yolande—which I need not say I shall never do. But everything will come right in the end," he continued hopefully, drawing his hand down Winnie's silky hair—"I surely ought not to dread the worst the world can do to me now that I have won you!"

A few minutes later, Lady Heathcote was standing alone in the window recess, when her brother came up and touched her arm.

"Come with me, Agatha—I want you for a moment in the billiard-room."



Slightly surprised, she followed as he led the way along the corridor, to the temporary stage that had been erected.

"Look through the hole in the curtain," he whispered as they ascended the platform, which was in semi-darkness, their footsteps waking no echo on the thick green baize with which it was covered. Lady Heathcote obeyed, and started back in direct anger at what she saw—Tresillian seated at Winnie's side, with his arm round her waist, talking very earnestly as he looked down into her liquid eyes.

"What does this mean?" she breathed to Devereux, who, his object accomplished, drew her into the adjoining room.

"It means that your despised little governess will take the place intended by you for Miss Heathcote," he rejoined with a sneer, that mocked her discomfiture, even while he himself was smarting under the same influences that had produced it. "It is a pity—Yolande would have made a good mistress of Hildrop Chase."

"Would? Will, you mean!" exclaimed his sister fiercely. "Do you think I will allow my plans to be overturned by that little slut of a thing—that paid dependent who is salaried to serve me?"

"I don't think you will have a hand in the matter, sister mine; all the preliminaries are already arranged—"

"Then you have listened to their conversation?" she interrupted, scornfully.

"I happened to overhear it—yes, and I am glad I was the victim of such a lucky chance, for what I have heard has edified me a good deal, in spite of certain lovers' rhapsodies which have been inflicted upon me as well."

"At all events, they shall stay no longer!" exclaimed Lady Heathcote, her voice still vibrating with anger; and followed by her brothers, she entered the billiard-room. Her appearance, however, had been heralded by the rustle of her silken skirt, which was the signal for the lovers to assume a more discreet attitude.

"Miss Brooke, you have been away from the ball-room a long time—I was wondering what had become of you!" she said, imperiously haughty both in voice and manner.

Tresillian started up and would have spoken, but Winnie prevented him—womanlike she had more regard for consequences than he.

"I am sorry, Lady Heathcote," she said, her voice of deep humility failing to hide the thrill of gladness with which it vibrated. "I will return at once."

"It was my fault, I brought Miss Brooke here," put in Eric, with the sunny smile that had so often been successful in charming away his hostess's anger. "I will do the best I can to repair my error by taking her back."

He offered his arm, and was leading her away, when, as they passed through the curtained doorway, one of the hooks that had been used to hold up the drapery caught in the lace of her corsage, and tore it back from her shoulder, thus revealing a long arrow-shaped mark—seemingly the scar of a deep cut—that disfigured the white flesh.

"What is that—have you hurt yourself?" cried Devereux, starting forward in apparent anxiety, and leaning down to look at the mark.

"Oh, no, thank you! I have had that scar as long as I can remember—from infancy," she replied quickly, pinning up the lace as she passed out.

"Well," observed Devereux, turning to his sister, and smiling grimly. "What do you think of all this?"

She did not reply, but her face was as white and set as if it had been carved in marble, and it seemed as much as she was able to do to keep her violent emotion within bounds. Devereux watched her a moment in curious silence, then went out and presently returned with a wine-glass full of brandy.

"Drink this, Agatha, it will do you good; and remember, if you would compel success to your plans you must not betray a symptom of anger, or—cowardice."

She looked at him rather wildly, and checked

the words trembling on her lips; then she swallowed the stimulant, and the dazed whiteness of her face gave place to a more natural colour under its influence. She said nothing to Devereux, but rejoined her guests while he remained behind.

"A very pretty complication!" he said to himself. "But for all that, if I know human nature as I think I do, and have calculated properly, my own path is clear enough through it all."

#### CHAPTER VI.

THE guests had departed—the last echo of carriage wheels died away—the household had retired, and Heathcote Towers returned to its normal condition of stately repose. Of all the lights that had glittered in its many windows, only one now remained, and that burnt within Lady Heathcote's boudoir. There Lady Heathcote, her evening dress exchanged for a loose cashmere *négligé*, was pacing restlessly up and down the room; while Yolande, in all the splendour of her silks and laces, lay prone on the couch, her face buried in her hands, and the brown wealth of her hair straying in shining coils over the velvet cushions. Every now and then a sharp sob burst from her.

"For heaven's sake, Yolande, don't give way like that!" exclaimed her stepmother at length, pausing by her side. "What good do you think it will do to lie there and cry?"

"As much as can be done any other way," retorted the girl, miserably. "It does not much matter whether I lie or sit, talk or am silent—he will not love me the more."

"That is not the question to be decided now. The first point is to make him love your rival less, and that may perhaps be effected if you will only rouse yourself to something like energy. I am willing to strain every nerve to drive away this girl."

Jealousy had more power than Lady Heathcote's entreaties. Yolande started up, her cheeks flushing, her eyes sparkling.

"Oh, how I hate her!" she exclaimed in a low, intense voice, while she actually trembled with repressed vehemence. "I almost think I could kill her."

"But as the law does not allow murder, you must be content with milder measures," said Lady Heathcote, quietly. "After all, Eric's fancy for her may not be a serious one—men have a way of coveting what is out of their reach, and wearying of what they possess"—bitterly. "Besides, Yolande, I do not think there is any danger of his marrying her, for I am convinced his aunt would withhold her consent, and he is not in a position to be independent of it."

She remained musing for some little time, during which the silence was unbroken.

"Yes," she said aloud, at length, "this Winnie Brooke must leave at once, come what may. Fortunately, both Eric and Sir Everard will be at the Seftons' to-morrow shooting, so there will be no interference to fear from either. In the morning I will send for Lady Emma as early as possible, tell her all that has transpired, and then she will at once explain to Miss Brooke that if she keeps Eric to his promise, she—in a pecuniary sense—ruins him."

"And the girl, when she finds he is penniless, will resign him!" added Yolande, quickly.

Lady Heathcote smiled rather contemptuously.

"You are quite wrong, *ma belle*; human nature—at least that phase of it exemplified by this girl—is to you a sealed book, although I myself have mastered it pretty accurately. If she resigns Eric, it will be for his sake, not her own, and this I shall impress on Lady Emma, so that she may arrange her tactics accordingly. Take comfort, Yolande," laying her hand on the girl's shoulder, "your rival shall have left the Towers this time to-morrow, and in a few days she will probably have left the country."

Yolande repeated the last few words in surprise.

"I have no time to explain," added her step-

mother. "I am anxious to have a few words with my brother on this subject, and I told him to wait for me in the smoking-room. You, Yolande, had better go to bed—it will soon be daylight."

She pressed a kiss on the girl's hot brow, and then went quietly from the room; while Yolande languidly prepared to retire.

The next morning Winifred came downstairs looking the very incarnation of brightness. Life seemed to her now a thing so beautiful that the mere fact of living was in itself a joy to be grateful for. She breakfasted alone, and when she had finished her meal began to work at some crosses she had undertaken for church decorations, singing softly to herself the while. At about noon, she heard carriage wheels up the drive, and concluded it must be a caller for Lady Heathcote; but less than half-an-hour afterwards a servant opened the door of the schoolroom, and announced—

"Lady Emma Tresillian."

Lady Emma greeted Winnie in her usual dignified, somewhat haughty manner, and then seated herself in a chair opposite to the one occupied by the young girl, who noticed how hard and stern her visitor's face looked as the light fell upon it.

"The purpose of my coming this morning especially concerns you, Miss Brooke," she said, in her calm even tones. "Doubtless you are at no loss to guess the subject on which I wish to speak. A little while ago I heard, to my extreme dismay, that my nephew had made you an offer of marriage—pray understand when I say 'dismay,' I have no wish to insinuate any objection to you personally; on the contrary, I entertain sentiments of esteem and respect towards you as 'Miss Brooke,' but I should certainly have the strongest possible aversion to your assuming the name of my nephew."

Winnie's breast heaved with passionate anger and resentment at this address, and she started up, her eyes flashing, but before she had time to speak Lady Emma resumed:—

"Pray listen to me quietly, Miss Brooke, and if you find my language too plain you must attribute it simply to my desire to put the case before you as it stands, and not from any wish to wound your feelings. May I ask if you are aware of the pecuniary position my nephew at present occupies?"

"I know he is poor, but that makes no difference so far as I am concerned."

"Poor!" repeated Lady Emma, raising her eyebrows. "That is only a comparative term, while the fact is Eric is literally a beggar; he has absolutely nothing but what I allow him. Do you understand me, Miss Brooke?"

"What has that to do with me?" demanded the girl, proudly. "Do you think I measure my love by the extent of a man's acres, or the depth of his pocket?"

"Your love has never entered my calculations, except in so far as it affects Eric himself," was the dry answer; "nevertheless, I am going to test if it be real or not—whether you place the gratification of a selfish passion before the welfare of the man you profess to care for, or whether you prove yourself a noble woman and give him up."

"I will never give him up!" passionately.

"What! not for his own good? Let me explain the situation to you, and then you will be better able to decide. Eric is, as you are aware, heir presumptive to my estates. As such I have always treated him, and have made him an allowance suitable to his position. Well, he has exceeded that allowance considerably. Some time ago he got into a set of men of rank even higher than his own, and whose extravagances led him into similar ones; he both betted and played, and although he sees his error now, and is, I believe, cured of gambling propensities, the consequences of his folly remain in the shape of an accumulation of debts that he looks to me to pay off. In the ordinary course of events I should have done this without hesitation, for I feel towards him the affection of a mother; but I declare to you most solemnly that if he thwarts my wishes in regard

to his marriage I will neither pay his debts nor leave him one farthing of my money. It shall go to his second cousin, Edmund Tresilian!"

There was a terrible earnestness in her words—the calm resolution of a steadfast will and a pitiless heart, which never softened either to pleadings or prayers, mingled with the fiery pride of caste, that would die rather than see its blue blood defiled with a less patrician element. Nevertheless, Winnie did not shrink.

"If Eric himself has weighed the cost, and is willing to risk it, I will do so most gladly."

"But he has not!" cried Lady Emma, vehemently. "He sees a pretty face; it catches his eye; it pleases his fancy; he must have it at any cost! But afterwards, when its novelty has worn off, he will see himself surrounded by embarrassments, unable to work—for what is a man, educated as he has been, fit for?—cut off from society, unnoticed by his friends, and he will curse the cause of his ruin. I do not speak too strongly, I know."

Winnifred made a passionate gesture for Lady Emma to cease, which, being obeyed, she pressed her hands to her brow, and vainly endeavoured to see her way through the tangled path that lay before her. One thing made itself quite clear—the fact that Lady Emma meant every word she said, and would inevitably carry out her threats of disinheritance if Eric disobeyed her wishes. Should Winnie allow him to do this—could she bear to see her yellow-haired lover—her gallant King Olaf, dragged down into the depths of poverty and humiliation, whose bitterness, if shared by her, would also be wrought through her agency?

"There is another point too," said Lady Emma, lowering her voice as she observed the effect she had produced. "It has come to my knowledge that Eric owes a debt of a thousand pounds, lost at cards, to one man. Now take it for granted, he marries you, which means I disinherit him—what will be his position then? Unable to redeem his word, he will be dishonoured for life; and no matter what good fortune might afterwards come to him, the memory of his unpaid debt of honour would never be forgotten."

"And you would allow this—yon, who pretend to love him?" exclaimed Winnie.

"Say rather, you, who pretend to love him, would compel me to a course I should be very sorry to adopt, but which I most certainly should do if he treated my wishes with contempt. Now I will give you another alternative. Release him from his promise—write and tell him that later considerations have induced you to take back your own—consent to leave Heathcote immediately, and I write on the spot a cheque for a thousand pounds, which you may post to him yourself, or which I give you my word I will put in his hand to-night. Decide quickly what you will do."

For five minutes the girl sat silent, battling fiercely with herself—striving to stem the waves of love that rose in her heart, while she endeavoured to see in an impartial and unbiassed manner the true way of showing how deeply and unselfishly she loved him. Then she rose, her face as white as the faded lilies she had fastened at her throat, and her eyes infinitely pathetic in their tragic depths of sorrow.

"I have decided," she said, in a low firm voice. "I could not bear to be the cause of misery to him, so—so—I give him up!"

Lady Emma rose too, and laid her hand on her shoulder; but the girl shrank back, as if the light touch were poisonous.

"You have a brave heart, and you have done well!"—was the meed of praise bestowed on her sacrifice.

(To be concluded in our next.)

"A MATCH safe!—a match safe!" exclaimed the young man's maiden aunt. "Well, I suppose it is, if all the folks on both sides are willing."

## FACETIÆ.

SUMMER travelling soot—Railway cinders.

LIBELLIOUS—A good-looking lass always loves a good looking-glass.

WHEN the sheriff sent his sweetheart a love-letter he called it "serving a writ of attachment."

It is often difficult for a man to live within his income; but it is still more difficult to live without it.

A NEW ERA.—In Greece it is not the Golden Age, nor the Silver Age, nor the Iron Age, but the Brigand-Age.

It is difficult for one man to give another a piece of his mind without destroying the peace of both their minds.

WHY does a coal barge weigh less than an empty sack? Because if one is a light weight, the other is a lighter.

USE OF THE BROOD.—A writer on school discipline says: "Without a liberal use of the rod it is impossible to make boys smart."

The last definition of "true philosophy."—Something which enables one to bear the losses of others with resignation and cheerfulness.

"ARE the squirrels very thick this year?" asked a gentleman of a hunter. "Well—yes," he said reflectively; "leastways the one I got was."

PARISIAN COURAGE.—As an old woman was lately walking through one of the streets of Paris at midnight, a patrol called out, "Who's there?" "It is I, patrol," said she, "don't be afraid."

"BE KIND to YOUR SISTER."—In addressing a school, a speaker said to the boys: "Always be kind to your little sisters. Now, I never had a little sister, and I once tried to be kind to some other fellow's sister, but she had a cruel father, and he hurt me helping me off the front steps."

SISTERLY AFFECTION.—"Does the world miss any one?" inquired a disconsolate maiden of some thirty-six summers and eight moons over. "The world will very likely continue to 'Miss' you," said her younger sister. "As for me, I shall be a 'Mrs.' before cherries are ripe."

HUMILITY.—A Scotch woman in humble life was asked one day on her way back from church whether she had understood the sermon, a stranger having preached. "Wud I had the presumption!" was her simple and contented answer.

CONSCIENTIOUS news-boy, who has been despatched with all speed to the refreshment-room by a famished passenger to fetch a penny bun, bribed with an additional penny to get one for himself (to famishing passenger): Please, sir, here's your penny. There was only one left.

"I CAN'T smoke this cigar much longer," said Tomkins, as he worried with a stub. "No," said some one present, "and you can't smoke it much shorter." Tomkins gave the imbecile one a pitying glance, and then hailed a tram and went home with a sad heart.

A PERFECT CURE.—Rustic: Look 'ere, mister, I understood this 'ere stuff I got 'o you would cure anything? Chemist: What, the "cure all"? Yes, so it will cure—Rustic: Well, then, there's cert'nly something wrong, for I've rubbed a whole bottle full on a ham, an' it's no more cured than you are.

ANECDOTE OF LORD NORTH.—His lordship was accustomed to sleep during the parliamentary bargues of his adversaries, leaving Sir Grey Cooper to note down anything remarkable. During a debate on ship-building some tedious speaker entered on a historical detail, in which, commencing with Noah's ark, he traced the progress of the art regularly downwards. When he came to build the Spanish Armada, Sir Grey inadvertently awoke the slumbering premier, who inquired at what era the honourable gentleman had arrived. Being answered, "We are now in the reign of Queen Elizabeth,"

"Dear Sir Grey," said he, "why not let me sleep a century or two more?"

HOME MAID.—"Doctor," said Miss Georgina to the popular family physician, who was a prosperous bachelor—"Doctor, is baker's bread or home-made bread the most wholesome?" "Ah!" said the doctor, with a meaning glance, "the home-made, of course. Give me the home maid in preference to every other." The wedding-cards were out in less than a month.

A WONDERFUL SIGHT.—A jolly Jack-tar having strayed into a menagerie to have a look at the wild beasts, was much struck with the sight of a lion and a tiger in the same den. "Why, Jack," said he to a messmate, who was chewing a quid in silent amazement, "I shouldn't wonder if next year they were to carry about a sailor and a marine living peaceably together!" "Aye," said his married companion, "or a man and wife."

NEVER AGAIN.—A young man of extraordinary appetite dining at a miser's, observing his host's dismay, said: "I have a hereditary good appetite; my mother was a remarkably quick eater, and my father would eat till he was hungry again." "Then I congratulate you," said the miser, "on uniting the perseverance of your father to the despatch of your mother." The young man nothing daunted, said: "I like this round of beef; one may cut and come again upon it." You may cut as soon as you will," said the old man, "but hang me if you ever come again."

RATHER MIXED.—When an old-fashioned merchant came to look over an order, made out by his new-fashioned clerk, the other day, he looked up over his spectacles, and said: "James, I see you have spelled shugar without an h." "Yes, sir, that's the proper way." "But I have spelled it with an 'h' for the last twenty-nine years." "Can't help that, sir. Sugar should not be spelled with an h." "Well, perhaps it shouldn't," sighed the old man, "perhaps it shouldn't. I presume that this mixing in glucose does make a difference somewhere."

THE parson extended the box to Bill, and he slowly shook his head. "Come, William, give something," said the parson. "Can't do it," said Bill. "Why not? Is not the cause a good one?" said he. "Yes, good enough; but I am not able to give anything," said Bill. "Pooh! pooh! I know better, you must give me a better reason than that." "Well, I owe too much money; and I must be just before I am generous, you know." "But, William, you owe heaven a larger debt than you owe any one else." "That's true, parson, but heaven ain't pushing me like the rest of my creditors."

ESOP IMPROVED.—An old monkey, designing to teach his sons the advantage of unity, brought them a number of sticks, and desired them to see how easily they might be broken one at a time. So each young monkey took a stick and broke it. "Now," said the father, "I'll teach you a lesson;" and he began to gather the sticks into a bundle. But the young monkeys, thinking he was about to beat them, set upon him altogether and disabled him. "There," said the sufferer, "behold the advantage of unity! If you had assailed me one at a time, I should have killed every mother's son of you!"

SLEEPING IN CHURCH.—A Scotch minister one Sunday observed many of the congregation nodding and asleep. He resolved to wake them, and took his measures accordingly. As he went on in his discourse, he introduced the word "hyperbolic," and then made a dead pause; after which he said, "Now, my friends, some of you may not understand this word hyperbolic. I'll explain it. Suppose that I were to say that this congregation were all asleep at the present moment, I would be speaking hyperbolically, because"—here he looked round—"I don't believe that more than one-half of you are sleeping." Before he had finished his spicy reprimand they were all wide awake.



## SOCIETY.

THE QUEEN proposed staying at Windsor until the end of last week. She was then to proceed to Osborne, and will remain there for about a month previous to returning to Balmoral for the autumn. It is anticipated that Her Majesty will reside at her Scottish seat for a period of three months.

MRS. WHEELER, one of the fashionable beauties, has come before the public as a composer of dance music. Her "Loyauté" valse, which is dedicated to the Prince of Wales, was played at the State balls.

On the 15th inst. the Earl and Countess of Breckinridge were present at the launch on Loch Tay of one of two new steamers which have been put together on the shores of that lovely loch. The boat ready for launching was christened the *Lady of the Lake* by the Countess, and there were great rejoicings.

THE EMPRESS EUGENIE since taking up her residence at Farnborough has been suffering from severe cold and painful debility. In the beginning of the week she was sufficiently recovered to pay Her Majesty a visit. Before leaving Windsor, accompanied by Princess Beatrice and the Princesses of Hesse, the Empress visited her son's memorial tablet in St. George's Chapel.

THERE are signs that young negro boys are coming into use as pages of fashionable ladies. It is presumed that the contrast of colour heightens the effect of their complexions, and pages are to be worn as beauty spots used to be.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL HASTINGS, C.B., son of the late Hon. Edward Hastings, was married on Saturday, the 1st ult., at St. Peter's, Eaton-square, to Miss Mabel Henniker, eldest daughter of Sir Brydges Henniker, Bart. The bride wore an exquisite toilette of white satin duchesse, trimmed with Brussels lace, and veil of the same lace with diamond ornaments. The bridesmaids were Miss Edith and Miss Louisa Henniker (sisters of the bride), Lady Lily Stopford and the Hon. Daisy Henniker (cousin of the bride). Their dresses were of cream muslin, lace, and insertion, with shot yellow satin sashes. They wore brown velvet hats with Gloire de Dijon roses, and bronze shoes. The presents were numerous and valuable.

THE marriage of Lord Capell, son of the late Viscount Malden, and grandson of the Earl of Essex, with Miss Ellenor Harriet Maria Harford, eldest daughter of Mr. W. H. Harford, of Oldown, Almondsbury, Gloucestershire, took place at St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, on Wednesday week, by special licence. The bride wore white satin duchesse, the front of which was covered with Brussels point, the gift of Lady Malden. Over a wreath of orange blossoms a tulle veil was fastened by a diamond arrow, the gift of the Earl of Essex, and a diamond star, the gift of her father. The bridesmaids were dressed alike in white satin and lace, draped with nun's veiling, and white bonnets trimmed with dark red carnations. Each wore a bracelet with the monogram of the bride and bridegroom, surmounted by a coronet in pearls, and carried a large bouquet of clove carnations. Several beautiful toilettes were worn at the wedding. The Countess of Clarendon's was a handsome dress of deep cream-coloured satin with red spots, the full bodice of which was confined to the waist by a Swiss belt of pale blue satin, with sash of the same; the underskirt was also fanned with blue satin, edged with cream lace; her bonnet was of white lace over blue satin, with pink and red feather aigrettes, a diamond button being fastened in the centre of the crown. Viscountess Malden wore chocolate brocade, with bonnet to match. At five o'clock Lord and Lady Capell left town for Holly Lodge, Taplow, to pass their honeymoon. The bride's travelling dress was of pale blue satin and Indian cashmere, with bonnet of ostrich feathers to match.

## STATISTICS.

FRENCH RAILWAYS.—The railways of France earned last year £42,815,130, or £1,620,000 more than in 1880. The increase in miles of road during the year was 750.

A MAN WHO HAS WALKED 175,200 MILES.—George Fawcett completed in April last his forty-seventh year of service in the Post Office as a rural messenger. From 1835 to 1842 he rode between Sedburgh and adjacent stations, carrying mails in this way a total distance of 67,160 miles. From 1842 to 1882 he has walked daily between Sedburgh and Dent, thus traversing 175,200 miles. His entire travel as postman foots up 242,360 miles, nearly ten times the distance round the earth, and 2,360 miles further than from the earth to the moon.

SPIRITS IN FRANCE.—It appears that France manufactured spirits last year to the extent of 1,821,287 hectolitres, as against 1,581,068 hectolitres in 1880, showing an increase of 240,219 hectolitres. In the total figures for 1881 the products of distillation of wine and cider have but a small part, viz.,—30,557 hectolitres. Indeed, the spirits produced from beet, molasses, and farinaceous substances now form nearly the whole production.

THE SUNDAY SOCIETY.—Five hundred and forty-five members of the Sunday Society visited the Grosvenor Gallery on Sunday, the 16th ult.

## GEMS.

THERE are more fools than sages; and among the sages there is more folly than wisdom.

It is with happiness as with watches; the less complicated the less easily deranged.

THE prompt performance of duty in the past is the best pledge for future faithfulness.

TREES in the forest may be barren, but trees in the garden should be fruitful.

As too long retirement weakens the mind, so too much company dissipates it.

GOLD is either the fortune or the ruin of mankind, according to its use.

A BEAUTIFUL woman is a queen before whose sceptre men bow.

In the interchange of thought use no coin but gold and silver.

OUR deeds determine us as much as we determine our deeds.

THOSE are the most honourable who are the most useful.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

GOOSEBERRY JAM.—Put twelve pounds of red rough gooseberries, when ripe, and gathered in dry weather, into a preserving pan, let them boil quickly, and mash with a spoon; when broken, add six pounds of preserving sugar, and simmer slowly to a jam. It requires long boiling, or will not keep. Look at it in two or three days, and if the fruit and the syrup separate, the whole must be boiled over again.

RASPBERRY AND RED CURRANT JAM.—Weigh equal quantities of raspberries and red currants and one pound of sugar to every pound of fruit; put the fruit into a preserving pan, boil and break it, stir constantly, and let it boil quickly. When most of the juice has disappeared add the sugar, and simmer half an hour. This jam is superior in colour and flavour to that which is made by putting the sugar in at first.

RED CURRANT AND RASPBERRY PUDDING.—Pick the stalks from one pound of red currants and one of raspberries, put them into an enamelled saucepan with enough loaf sugar to sweeten to taste, then let it simmer gently for twenty minutes. Have ready a mould or basin lined with thin slices of stale bread without the crusts. Pour the fruit in the mould, cover over the top with a plate and place a weight on it. Then put it in a cool place. Eaten the next day cold with a little cream or custard it is delicious.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

AT FAIRLEIGH, near Hastings, two young men last week killed a snake of enormous size for England, quite a boa constrictor. It measured two yards long, and was of the thickness of a man's wrist. Local authority vouches for this big thing in snakes.

Does rowing pay? In general the reverse; people pay for rowing. Hanlan, however, is a slight exception; for, if report does not belie his pocket, it has got £16,000 in it from his present year's doings. He must have made a few bets on himself to accomplish this feat, which is even more wonderful than his rowing.

ANCIENT RECORDS OF POPULAR FESTIVITIES sometimes tell of streets running with wine, and this tradition was recently put into actual practice at Offenburg. A wine merchant had been convicted of serious adulteration, so the police set to work and pumped up the contents of 400 casks from the offender's cellar into the gutter of the main street, which flowed for a whole day. The poor people were delighted, and brought every available jug and tub to fill till the police stopped them from carrying off the deleterious liquid. Talking of adulteration, the Californians now mix glue with their ice-cream, as it increases the consistency and quantity of cream at a very cheap rate.

A new kind of cycle has been imported for his Highness Jaswant Singh Bahadur, K.G.C.S.I., Maharaja of Jodhpur. It is five seated, and propelled in the ordinary manner of tricycles, with chain gearing to each of the large wheels, which are sixty inches in diameter; the action of four of the riders, who are comfortably seated on velvet-piled seats, being quite independent of each other, while the whole machine is guided when in motion by the action of the rider of a fifty-six inch bicycle, which is attached at the head of the machine. It is a very elaborate piece of workmanship, electro-plated all over, and costs 2,000 rupees. It has given great satisfaction to his Highness, which has induced his Highness Sadik Mahomed Khan Bahadur, K.G.C.S.I., Nawab of Bahawalpur, to purchase one exactly the same in all particulars.

FEMALE STUDENTS AT OXFORD.—The university education of women still progresses apace. It is announced that, following the example of Cambridge, Oxford is for the future about to publish the class list of the positions taken by the women students in the official *University Gazette*, and that, in addition to the instruction given in Somerville Hall, &c., several of the courses of lectures in the University which have been previously restricted to men will be thrown open to women also. The plan has been for several years followed at University College, London, and, we may suppose, with advantage, or it would not have been followed by the older University.

A WEATHER COMPASS.—It is well known that the barometer of itself makes a very poor weather glass, because of the fact that the humidity of the atmosphere and the direction of the wind have to be taken into account as well as the barometrical pressure. In the weather compass of Professor Klinkerfues, of Göttingen, an attempt is made to combine these observations in such a way that the instrument indicates the joint result to be deduced from them. The apparatus consists of an aneroid barometer, the needle of which is also controlled by a horse-hair hygrometer indicating the degree of moisture in the air. The influences of the aneroid and the hygrometer may be either concurrent or counter to each other as determining the position of the needle, and forewarning the probable weather within the next twelve or twenty-four hours. The direction of the wind is also made a factor in the problem by means of a disc marked with the prevailing directions in which it blows. The device is ingenious, and is stated to yield a high percentage of accurate warnings.—*Engineering.*

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**ALICE C.**—The marriage would not be legal in this country. If your lover and yourself wish to dispense with all ceremony and uneasy expense why not be married at a Registrar's office, about the validity of which there can be no dispute?

**MAUDE.**—1. Lockets are still fashionable and worn rather large, but if any other ornament is preferred a brooch, small cross, or pendant may be substituted. 2. The meaning of the game was given in reply to "Super, J." last week, except ruby, meaning oblivion, and coral sweetness or affection.

**E. A. K. C.**—It is a hard case, and if you can prove what you state, no doubt he can be compelled to contribute to the children's support; but would it not be as well to pause and consider those children's future before resorting to the publicity of a Court of Justice.

**MARTHA B.**—The Spanish Armada was dispersed on the 28th July, 1588.

**S. B. P.**—The Suez Canal was opened in 1869, and in Nov., 1875, England acquired shares to the value of four millions sterling.

**ORIANA** writes: "Will you please tell me what the letters A. M. and P. M. means? I know they stand for morning and afternoon, but do not know their exact meaning." They are initials of the Latin *ante meridiem* and *post meridiem*, before noon or meridian, and after meridian.

**SAUD.**—It is a pleasure to answer our correspondents, and no trouble whatever. We commend your dislike to speaking to a strange man in the street; no gentleman worthy of the name would respect a lady who sought his acquaintance in that way.

**AGNES J.**—The chief bridesmaid's duty is to stand behind the bride, and hold her gloves, handkerchief, or bouquet, and give her any little feminine attentions that are necessary.

**LITTLE SNOWDROP.**—A young lady who affects to be "fast," deals in semi-slange, dresses "loud," and is always running about, would not be apt to make a good wife. Nothing wears so well in woman, or so much endears her to man, as modesty and goodness of heart; and there are few things more repellent to a man of good sense and refinement than a vulgar woman.

**S. G. D.**—All cosmetics applied to the face are more or less injurious. Violet powder and finely-powdered magnesia, carmine, and rouge are also harmful, as they stop up the pores of the skin, and are sure in time to make the complexion sallow.

**DAISY J.** wants to know how lovers can manage so as never to quarrel, which, of course, we cannot tell her, as lovers are bound to have their little "tiffs." What would love and courtship be worth were they one everlasting dose of honey, without the least touch of alleviating and correcting acidity? Honey will itself turn sour and unpleasant at last. It is not in human nature for sweet hearts to be without "a few words" now and then, and consider how delightful it is to make it up again afterwards! What does the poet say—  
"Little quarrels often prove  
To be but new recruits of love."

**ALBERT F.**—Your wages are certainly very small to marry on, but if your choice has fallen on a thrifty, industrious, young person, it is very possible to live comfortably even on that little income, and probably the bride-elect (if clever at her needle) can add to your funds.

**J. R.**—A gentleman is not supposed to wear an engagement ring, and there is no particular finger on which a gentleman ought to wear any ring. It is entirely a matter of taste.

**ELDON F. D.**—A man has a right to change his name, and take any other that he likes. But if he does so for the mere purpose of defrauding any one he must take the consequences.

**UNDINE.**—We cannot say that we think you entirely in the right. Lovers are a jealous race, and, if very fond of a lady, they can scarcely be expected to tolerate men who seem to be favoured and smiled upon as much as themselves. Besides, if you have engaged yourself to the gentleman he has the right to expect that you will treat him with more consideration than your other gentlemen friends. If you will look upon his requests as prompted by a fervent affection, and try to grant them, you will come to see that they are not so very "selfish" or "unreasonable."

**J. R.**—*Ipsa dixit* is a Latin phrase which means, translated literally, "he himself said it," but which is often used to express dogmatism or (freely translated) mere assertion. If you are inclined to be "thin and nervous" give up drinking tea and coffee. Use cold water, milk, chocolate, or very light beer instead. You can thus gain flesh and you will find your health improved. Get plenty of sleep and keep regular hours. Spend at least two hours a day in the open air.

**FREDA.**—Artificial flowers are now used in many ways for household decorations as well as for personal adornment. Jardinieres and vases are filled with them, panels of plush, velvet, or satin are ornamented with them and hung upon the wall or placed on easels. The corners of a photograph and any rich plush or velvet frames have a tiny bouquet attached, lambrequins and table-scarfs are adorned with clusters of them, and they are used as plentifully as embroidery.

**TOM.**—Our advice to you would be to settle down and convince the lady in question that you are sincere in your promises of reform and future steadiness. You are young enough to allow her to test your resolution and sincerity for a year or two before you urge her again to answer your suit.

**CORA F.**—1. The size of your dining-room and the limits of your table should determine the number of your guests, and, if possible, you should invite an equal number of gentlemen and ladies. 2. When the guests are seated, the soup is served by the servants, or, if the dinner is an informal one, the tureen is placed in front of the hostess, and she sends the plates by the servants, first to the right and then to the left, until all at the table are served.

**LORD WREHAM.**—If a gentleman is corresponding with a lady upon some matter of business, or desires a favour in the way of business, he may and should send a postage stamp for a reply to his favour; but if she is a friend or an acquaintance with whom he is in correspondence, it is not proper that he should send a stamp for a reply.

**PUZZLED.**—A younger lady should always wait for the elder lady to speak or bow first. She can smile as she approaches, but wait for her friend to recognise her, unless there is an intimate friendship between them, and then it does not matter which it is that speaks first.

**J. L. M.**—Ink-stains on mahogany or black walnut furniture may be removed by touching the stains with a feather wet in a solution of nitre and water—eight drops to a spoonful of water. As soon as the spot disappears, rub the place at once with a cloth wet with cold water. If the ink-stains then remain, repeat, making the solution stronger. Silver that is not in use may be kept from tarnishing by burying it in a box or barrel of oatmeal.

## THE LOVE AT HOME.

Of all the blessings that Heaven sends forth,  
There's none like the Love at Home,  
So hardy of growth, so rich in worth,  
So varied and sweet of bloom.  
'Tis the one love flower beyond compare,  
By every favour kissed,  
Thriving alike in the valley's air  
And aloft in the mountain's mist.

Its origin pure, the family tie,  
Its haunt the roof-top's shade,  
When once firm-planted, or low or high,  
Its flowers can never fade.  
In every clime of earth 'tis found  
Far as the thought can roam,  
And there's beauty and comfort all around  
With love, sweet love at home.

In its rustling leaves is the sound at times  
Of children's voices sweet,  
Or of mother's words, or of church-bell chimes,  
Or of pattering little feet;  
In its fragrance rich is the breath of sighs  
And memorial kisses dear,  
And the light of its bloom, which never dies,  
Is bright as the sunshine clear.

Des'gns unworthy and hopes untrue  
Depart in its smile benign;  
'Tis the blessing that lasts a lifetime through  
With a tenderness all divine.  
Without it, how little were left to cheer  
And exalt under Heaven's wide dome!  
Oh, there's nothing in all the world so dear  
As love, sweet love at home!

C. C.

**POOR MILL MAT.**—For freckles take an ounce and a half of the best leaf-lard, add half an ounce of spermaceti and two ounces of oil of almonds. Melt all together over a slow fire, stirring while melting; add three ounces of onion juice, fresh, and stir off the fire, till cool. Scent with oil of bergamot or lavender. Use freely on the skin, putting on a little to remain overnight, and wash off in the morning with clear lukewarm water. A still more simple remedy is to shake together in a bottle equal parts of liquid glycerine and rose-water, till well mixed. Apply to the skin overnight, and wash off in a clear, lukewarm water in the morning. If your skin roughens or freckles easily, you should always wear a veil or broad-rimmed hat in very sunny, or in very windy weather.

**J. D. (Ilford).**—Yes. In former days, under some of the great empires of the East, the gates or *porticoes* of palaces were the places where the law-givers and judges assembled; hence arose the title of the Sublime Porte, which is a name commonly given to the Government of Turkey. "Sublime" is a French word, meaning lofty, and seems to have been adopted in consequence of the French language being the one which is generally used in the official communications passing between the various European Governments.

**W. X.**—The 26th of July, 1884, was on a Tuesday.

**ESTHER.**—You are wrong and your husband is certainly right. Put aside your pride and make him a graceful apology, and another time do not hold so obstinately to your opinion.

**B. M. J.**—You are mistaken about Friday being the only unlucky day. Thursday has always been considered an unlucky day in Devonshire, where it has but one lucky hour, and in Scandinavia it is in equally bad repute. In Cochinchina unlucky days are the third day of the new moon, being that on which Adam was expelled from Paradise; the fifth, when the whale swallowed Jonah; the sixteenth, when Joseph was put into the well; the twenty-fourth, when Zachariah was murdered; and the twenty-fifth, when Mohammed lost his front teeth. And among some other nations the last Monday in April, the first in August, and the "first Monday of the going out of the month of December" are regarded as unlucky.

**AUSTRIA.**—The crowns of England and Scotland were united in 1603. The union of Great Britain and Ireland was not consummated until 1801. The Queen is crowned as "Queen of Great Britain and Ireland"—Ireland being governed locally by a "Lord Lieutenant."

**CARA.**—The leaves can be obtained at Covent Garden Market.

**INQUIRING JOE.**—The sea is not made salt by any natural deposits of salt in its depths. Fresh water carries down with it the salts of sodium, magnesium, chlorine, &c. These are left in the sea by the evaporation of the water constantly going on, by which the moisture of the atmosphere is chiefly sustained. After ages of this process of evaporation the sea has become heavily charged with salts, and as ages roll on this saline quality will increase until the water absolutely becomes dense with salt.

**SYLVIA.**—1. The wedding dress to which you refer was that of Queen Adelaide. It was embroidered with flowers, the initials of which formed her name. Even handsomer was the wedding dress of Maria de las Mercedes, Queen of Spain. It was of white satin covered with Alençon point lace, on which was worked the arms of all the realms into which Spain was formerly divided. 2. Handwriting fair.

**BESSIE B.**—Certainly the ostrich is raised for the feathers. They are domesticated in Africa, and the trade is enormous, amounting yearly to millions. The birds are fed and reared upon large farms for the purpose, and the feathers are worth about £30 a pound. They are sold in bulk, and afterwards divided into the choice lots and packed for European and American markets according to quality. Single feathers of extra length and weight bring very large sums.

**AGNES GRACE.**—You do not state whether the ivory box you wish to clean is simply soiled, or discoloured by stains. If it is only dirty, make a lather of white soap, lukewarm water, and spirits of ammonia, and scrub it with a soft brush. If it is stained, put it while damp, after cleaning, under a glass shade, and expose it to the sun. Wet it occasionally with clear water, and remove it in the sun. After a few days the stains will bleach out. If the ivory has a plain surface, use soft flannel instead of a brush, but if it is carved the brush is necessary.

**ELLEN.**—Diluted alcohol or ammonia and hot water will do to sponge your silk and your grenadine. Borax and hot water is used for cashmere. Gripe can only be restored by those who make a business of such things. Don't you bother with it for fear of ruining the lace. The hair is a bright brown.

**ARTIST.**—"Raphael's" real name was Raffaello Santi, and he was born in the city of Urbino, March 28, 1483. His Giovanni Santi, was a refined and cultivated gentleman and a poet and painter of considerable repute. Raphael lived and died among friends and without an enemy; he was loved and honoured by brother painters, by patrons and pupils, and by Pope Leo X. and Julius II. He died on Good Friday, April 7, 1520, only thirty-seven years old, having, despite his youth, painted a marvellous number of famous pictures. He took cold while talking with the Pope in one of the old halls of the Vatican, had a chill and then a fever, and died in a few days.

**JESSIE.**—A lady with ever so good a voice, and considerable knowledge of music, must devote at least two years to careful training and practice before she will be fitted to sing in public. The salaries of public singers vary so greatly, according to the talent and reputation of each, that it would be impossible for us to give you any fair estimate.

**F. J. P.**—Frederick means "rich peace," William "the preserver of many," Peter "a rock," Mary "bitter."

**WILLIAM O'C.**—1. The best method of washing flannels after being worn is to cut up a pound of soap (yellow is the best) in thin shavings, and put into a saucepan with three pints of hot water; boil till all the soap is thoroughly dissolved. Turn into a pan till cold, when it will be a firm jelly. When required for use have the wash-tub nearly filled with water, as hot as the hands can bear, and put in enough of the soap jelly to make a good lather, so as to wash the flannel without using any other soap. Take only a few flannels at a time, wash quickly, and take out. Rinse in very hot water, shake well, and dry in the open air, which makes them soft and a good colour. 2. Consult the advertisement columns of the newspapers.

**R. V.**—The first thing in the case of bunions is to wear large and comfortable shoes. If the bunion is not inflamed put over it a piece of diachylon or lead plaster, and upon that a piece of thick leather having a hole the size of the bunion cut in it. This will remove the pressure. If inflamed it must be poulticed, and if severe be lanced, but this should be done by a medical man. The following ointment is recommended for an inflamed bunion: Iodine, twelve grains; lard, half an ounce well mixed; a portion about the size of a horse-bean to be rubbed gently on the bunion two or three times a day.

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